Framing note

Trends in development finance for gender

Mapping risks and opportunities for funders

Rachel George and Nilima Gulrajani
June 2023

Key messages

After years of expansion, gender-related development finance is facing several challenges. Official Development Assistance (ODA) for gender is plateauing, new priorities have emerged, anti-gender finance has grown, and focused gender projects are not increasing.

Development finance for gender faces the risks of distortion, diversion and dilution. Collectively, these can undermine gender equality objectives by impacting both the quality and quantity of funding for gender.

Philanthropic actors can navigate these threats by identifying opportunities for ramping up direct gender equality investment, especially in the climate sector, working more closely with official bilateral donors and reforming the gender-marking system..

Donors in a Post-Aid World

How to cite: George, R. and Gulrajani, N. (2023) 'Trends in development finance for gender: mapping threats and opportunities for funders'. Framing Note. London: ODI.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Frederique Dahan, Heather Dicks, Lori Heise, Ruti Levtov and Joy Watson for their feedback and comments on this piece. Thanks to Tegan Rogers, Matt Foley and Sherry Dixon for their assistance with the production process.

About the authors

ORCID numbers are given where available. Please click on the ID icon next to an author's name in order to access their ORCID listing.

Rachel GeorgeID is a Lecturing Fellow in the Center for International Development at Duke University.

Nilima GulrajaniID is a Senior Research Fellow in the Development and Public Finance Team at ODI.

Contents

Display items

Figures

1 Introduction

Official development finance for gender equality has risen steadily over the last decade, accounting for 40% of official development assistance (ODA) in 2021. However, recent survey data indicates that, over 2016–2019, only 8% of all private philanthropy for development targeted gender (OECD, 2021a; 2023).[1] This difference in gender prioritisation across public and philanthropic actors is stark, even after taking into account the risk of over-inflated gender ODA statistics. It is therefore no surprise that activists are calling for increased philanthropic investment for gender, especially longer-term, core grants to women's funds and feminist movements (Shake the Table and Bridgespan, 2022).[2]

This brief presents an overview of governmental gender financing trends, where things are not as healthy as they may seem at first glance. This analysis can contextualise activist calls for more and better quality finance from all development funders (Lever et al, 2020; George and Harper, 2022; Tant and Jimenez, 2022), and raise awareness of core challenges as funders design their strategies and construct their investment portfolios.

We know that official funding focused on gender is plateauing in the face of a fragile geopolitical environment and multi-layered, global challenges (OECD, 2023), including the fallout from the Covid-19pandemic; ongoing Western anxieties about China; new conflicts in Ukraine and Sudan, alongside long-standing violence in places like Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Haiti; concerns about the effects of a warming climate; and the growing prevalence of strongman, authoritarian leadership. Yet the surge in ODA in 2022 – rising past $200 billion for the first time – may provide a false sense of optimism (OECD, 2023). If spending on Ukraine and on refugee hosting is deducted, ODA was actually $159 billion, an 11% nominal decrease on the previous year.[3] Wealthier countries are increasingly becoming recipients of their own aid, deprioritising the most vulnerable and marginalised people in the poorest countries of the world.[4]

In this environment, development finance for gender may be at risk of distortion, dilution and diversion in a way that jeopardises the collective fights of donors and philanthropies for gender equality. This is the backdrop against which activists' demands for more and better financing for gender must be evaluated, and new opportunities and directions for funder investment are assessed.

---

1 Admittedly, this figure may exaggerate the difference between public and philanthropic investment in gender. For example, for the 31 foundations that report regularly to the OECD, $1.9 billion of the $7.6 billion provided in developing countries integrated or was dedicated to gender equality, corresponding to 25% of financial flows (OECD, 2021b).

2 The investment requested of philanthropy comes to an additional $1.5 billion annually until 2026 invested directly in these organisations.

3 See here for a good thread of the main issue at play: https://twitter.com/EconMitch/status/1646202569792929793

4 This is because they are directing more funding to settle refugees, spending more money in activities that are not programmable in country (e.g. research and development, scholarships), recoup debt relief as ODA, and claim excess costs for vaccines that were stockpiled and then donated as ODA (Craviotto and Ravenscroft, 2023; DAC-CSO Reference Group, 2023).

2 Trends in gender-related finance

2.1 A decade of growth

Growing women's activism, galvanised by the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, has helped drive a strong gender focus across the international development system, including across all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and most notably SDG 5. The 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration served as a rallying point for continued mobilisation, for instance, via convenings like Women Deliver and the Generation Equality Forum. This conducive environment has pushed the proportion of ODA with at least a partial focus on gender from 5% in 2002 to roughly 42% in 2020 (Figure 1).

Meanwhile, the emergence of feminist foreign/assistance policies[5] that mandate a gender focus has also helped sustain allocations for gender. Gender-related ODA is led by top donors Canada, the Netherlands, Ireland and Iceland, and is highest in the areas of social infrastructure and services (including employment, housing and social protection), agriculture and rural development and education, but relatively low in humanitarian aid and the energy sector. Bilateral mechanisms are boosted by new aggregator gender funds like the Equality Fund, seeded by the Canadian government (with recent co-funding from the UK) to invest in women's and feminist funds and support women's rights organisations.

Multilateralism is an important channel for official gender finance, but calculating total investment is not obvious because core funding to UN agencies cannot be traced back to gender equality goals, with the exception perhaps of UN Women, which was established in 2010 as a focal point within the UN system to drive progress on meeting women's and girls' needs (UN Women, n.d.). Other UN entities including UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP complement the global architecture for gender, alongside multilateral and regional development banks (Norris, 2022). These are often funded via multilateral gender-responsive funds, which can be structured as pooled inter-agency funds.[6] Around a third of multi-partner trust funds (37%) and half of joint programmes (48%) have financial targets for gender equality (UN ECOSOC, 2021).

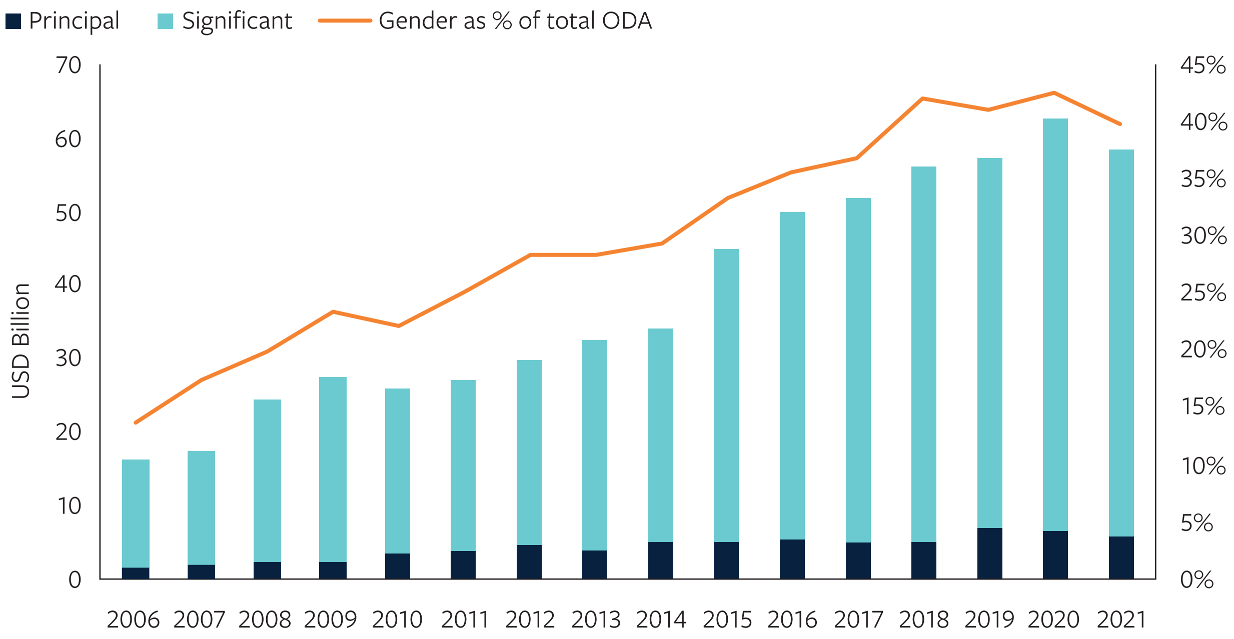
Official development finance for gender beyond concessional aid has also increased. Development finance institutions, development banks, commercial investors and private philanthropy are all intensifying commitments with a 'gender lens'. Although not without critique (see Amin and Yahaya, 2023), over $5 billion was raised for gender impact investing in 2020, with 67% of all assets under blended finance vehicles integrating or dedicated to gender equality in

5 For example, Sweden (2014) (although later revoked in 2022), Canada (2017), France (2019) and Germany (2023).

6 For example, the Spotlight Initiative, the Elsie Initiative Fund and gender initiatives within the UN Peacebuilding Fund and Joint SDG Fund.

sectors such as agriculture, banking and financial services (OECD, 2022). While philanthropic investment in gender remains small-scale, collectives such as the Gender Co-Impact Fund are bringing together foundations, philanthropies and corporations to pool resources and invest in locally rooted, women-led organisations.

Figure 1 Bilateral development finance for gender equality (2006–2021), constant US$



Source: OECD.Stat, downloaded 22 May 2023[7]

2.2 A recent plateau

Notwithstanding the noticeable growth in development finance marked for gender, since 2018 absolute ODA volumes targeting gender have hovered around $65 billion, with a noticeable dip in between 2020 and 2021. The percentage of ODA focused on gender (calculated as per the OECD's gender marking system, which sums all projects tagged as 'principal' or 'significant'[8] to calculate total bilateral ODA for gender) has plateaued at a little over 40% since 2018. This is notwithstanding major international mobilisation over this period, including Women Deliver (2019), the Commission on the Status of Women Beijing +25 (2020) and the Generation Equality Forum (2021). Gender-focused projects marked *significant* peaked in 2020 declining the following year (Figure 1).

7 OECD screens 92% of bilateral sector-allocable aid against gender markers, and additionally, provides for two CRS 'purpose codes' that indicate the main sector a project to programme aims to support, coding for women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions (15170) and violence against women and girls (15180) which can be more specifically tracked.

8 Projects marked significant have gender equality as an important and deliberate objective, though this is not the main reason for undertaking the project or programme. Projects marked principal have gender equality as a main objective, fundamental to project design and expected results (OECD, 2016).

There are also important limitations to investment in the multilateral gender architecture, many of which are detailed in a forthcoming independent review of the UN system's capacity to deliver gender quality (Dalberg Global Development Advisors, forthcoming). Only 2.03% of the UN development system's expenditure is allocated to gender equality and women's empowerment, and just 2.6% of UN personnel work on gender specifically (UN ECOSOC, 2017). Just 1.7% of UN humanitarian responses target gender equality and women's empowerment, and 2% of all UN development system aid directed at peace and security in fragile states and economies focuses on gender equality (UN Women and UNFPA, 2020).

Regular sources of revenue from assessed contributions for UN Women constitute only 1% of its revenue base. UN Women has thus had to rely heavily on unpredictable voluntary funds earmarked to meet shortfalls (Haug, Gulrajani and Weinlich, 2022). While total revenues were almost $700 million in 2021, this fell short of the $1 billion activists hoped UN Women would be able to access (ICRW, 2017; Norris, 2022).

2.3 Stagnation of principal gender-related finance

The value of projects that have gender as a *principal* ambition with gender-specific indicators, monitoring and evaluation plans has hovered consistently just over $5 billion, representing a relatively small subset of gender-marked spending. According to the OECD gender equality policy marker – a statistical tool to record aid activities that target gender equality as a policy objective – a project coded "principal" has gender equality as the main objective and is fundamental in its design and expected results (OECD, 2016).

Having gender as a principal objective is not by definition better than having it as a significant objective. Drawing on feminist scholarship on transformative organisational work for gender equality (Moser and Moser, 2005; Derbyshire, 2012), the OECD recommends that donors adopt a twin-track approach to gender equality across their portfolios, combining dedicated/targeted interventions (principal aim) with gender mainstreaming (significant aim) (OECD, 2016). A twin-track approach allows for dedicating some interventions for gender equality while mainstreaming it across all policy, strategy and programming (OECD, 2023).

The share of gender-focused ODA projects falls short of gender advocates' calls that at least 20% of all foreign policy funding should be dedicated and targeted to narrowing gender gaps (ICRW, 2020). Even Canada, which in 2017 launched a Feminist International Assistance Policy and has marked around 95% of its development assistance as targeting gender in some way, allocates just over 6% of funds with gender equality as a *main* objective (a long way from the government's own target of 15%) (Novovic, 2021).

2.4 Anti-gender financing scales up

Gender equality actors face an additional challenge: the expansion of funding *counter* to the gender equality movement. The European Parliamentary Forum found that, from 2009 to 2018, more than $700 million (coincidentally, equivalent to UN Women's annual total revenue) was spent by 'anti-gender activists'. These activists came from 54 organisations, including NGOs, foundations, religious organisations and political parties, primarily from the United States, Russia and Europe (Datta, 2021). Of this, $81.3 million originates from 10 NGOs, think tanks and foundations in the United States and $188 million from Russian foundations, media and think tanks, supported by two prominent oligarchs.

Counter-agenda funding deploying targeted tools to undermine international women's rights agendas cannot be entirely decoupled from the growth in patriarchal authoritarian leadership (Sanders, 2018). The worldwide assault on democracy is an important explanation for the rollback on women's rights and investment towards such efforts (Chenoweth and Marks, 2022).[9] The turn towards more conservative agendas equally risks jeopardising progress. For example, in Sweden, which has long been held up as an exemplary champion of gender equality, the election of a coalition conservative government relying on backing from the far-right has undone explicit commitments to feminist foreign policy.[10]

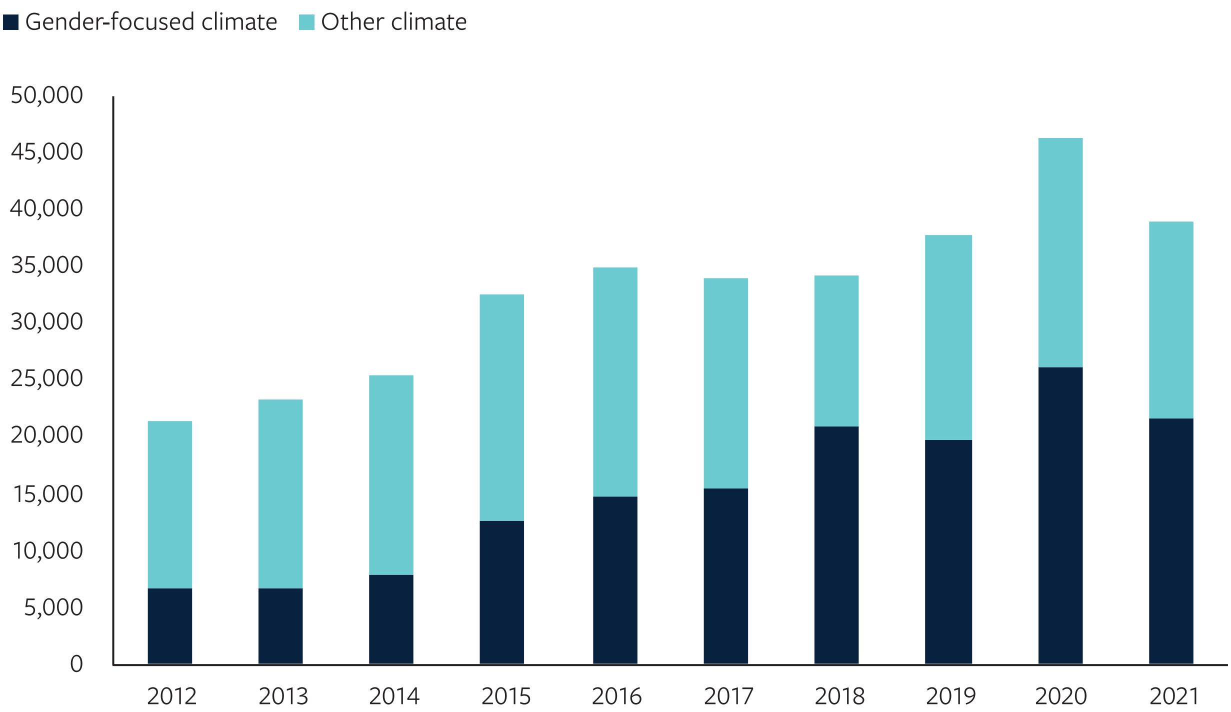
2.5 The turn to climate

Enormous financing efforts are necessary to secure global net zero emissions by mid-century. Fixing the 'triple planetary' crisis (climate change, pollution and diversity loss) is a major priority that now animates all global funders. The share of ODA devoted to climate (mitigation and adaption) has grown consistently since 2015, only plateauing at the peak of the Covid crisis. Recent survey data indicates that, while only 8% of philanthropic respondents target gender, more than 50% apply a climate-change lens to their grants (OECD, 2021).

DAC members recognise the importance of centring gender within concessional climate finance, especially adaptation finance, which aims to increase the resilience of women and their livelihoods in the face of a changing climate (OECD, 2022).[11] Bilateral climate ODA that integrates gender equality has grown consistently, and now amounts to more than half of all bilateral climate ODA (Figure 2). But less than 3% of climate-related ODA had gender as a principal objective in 2021.

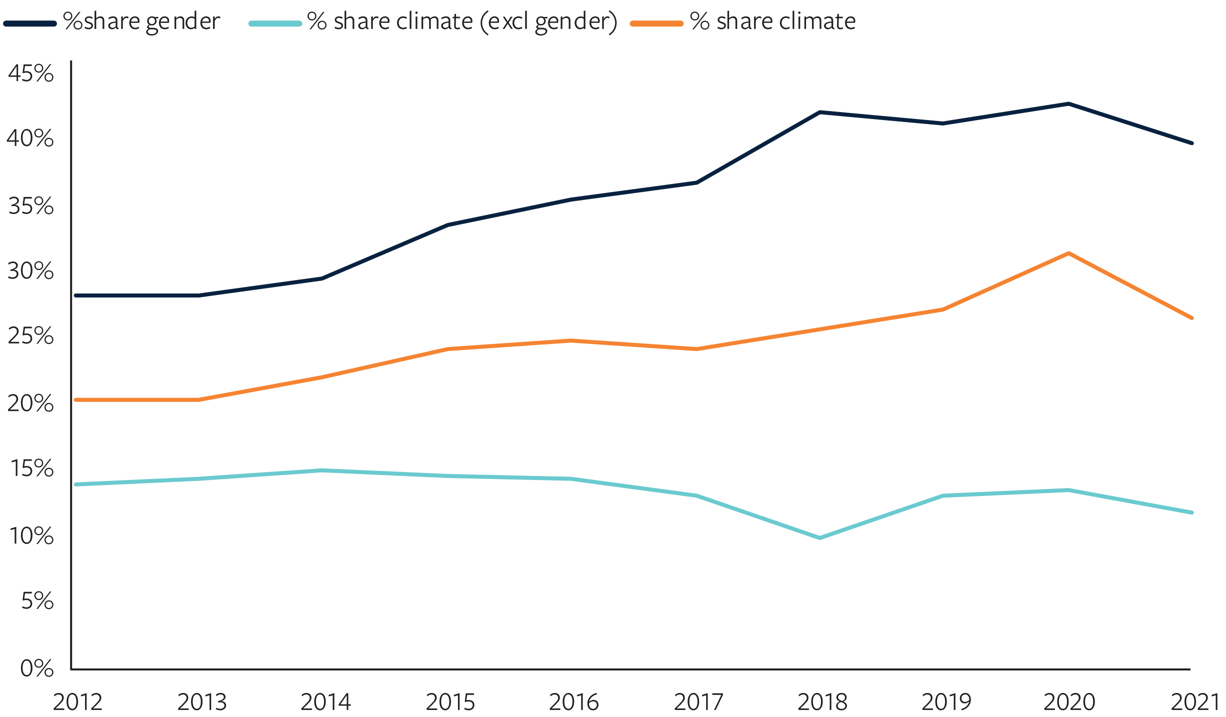
9 See also www.lse.ac.uk/gender/research/AHRC/AHRC-home
10 www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/31/swedens-new-government-abandons-feminist-foreign-policy
11 This is in line with Article 7.5 of the Paris Agreement (2015), which states that all adaptation action should be 'gender-responsive'.

Figure 2 Bilateral climate ODA, commitments, US$ million (constant 2021)



Source: Climate change DAC External Development Finance Statistics

Figure 3 Shares of bilateral ODA, commitments



Source: Climate change: DAC External Development Finance Statistics. Gender: Creditor Reporting System

As of now, bilateral climate-focused ODA is not outpacing growth in gender-focused ODA (Figure 3), and over 2020–2021 both seemed to be on a downward trajectory. But pressure to increase finance for climate[12] is leading to concerns that mobilised funding is not new money but repurposed from existing international public finance, with detrimental effects for other spending (Ryan, 2019). Several donors have reported large increases in bilateral climate aid without materially increasing overall aid levels, suggesting this increase has come at the expense of concessional spending on other priorities (Mitchell et al., 2021).

Recent analysis challenges this by showing that increases in climate finance are resulting from rebadging existing energy and transportation investments as 'climate finance' as they transition to renewable technologies, not cross-sectoral reallocation (Miller et al., 2023). Nevertheless, there are good reasons to think this study may be understating the cross-sectoral substitution effects between gender and climate.[13] This points to the need to understand whether there is any risk of substitution between climate and gender spending, and whether this is meaningfully compensated by growth in spending at the intersection of climate and gender.

12 High-income countries fell short of the UN 2009 Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) target of $100 billion in 'new and additional' finance per year from 2020, only attaining $83.3 billion. A New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) is currently being negotiated. See https://unfccc.int/NCQG

13 This is because the study looks at all official flows rather than just ODA, gender does not constitute a sector of financing in their analysis and given low levels of gender expenditure within the energy sector (see OECD, 2023), a substitution effect in this direction may still be compatible with lower gender expenditures.

3 Three risks to global gender finance

The above analysis points to several threats facing the trajectory of development finance for gender. To the extent that finance is an important means for securing gender equality, in lower-income countries especially, the risks of distorting, diluting or diverting gender-focused investments can jeopardise delivery of long-standing international commitments.

3.1 Distortion: Funding for gender equality is distorted by approaches to gender marking investments

Both public and philanthropic actors use the OECD gender marking system to report their activities.[14] Yet, several studies indicate that gender marking is a problematic way to aggregate and measure gender-focused investment. Mismarking, inflated marking, inconsistent marking and insufficient baselines are all noted problems.[15] This can be compounded if there are differential marking methods to which funding must be reported.[16] One part of this challenge arises because donors must align national data and metrics with the OECD system.[17]

A 2020 study analysing 72 projects from seven donors[18] highlights some of these problems, finding that about a quarter marked for gender were mismarked (Grabowski and Essick, 2020). The study found that only about 20% identified or addressed unintended negative consequences for gender, a requirement for applying the marker. And 14 of the projects reviewed marked as 'principal' did not include gender equality as a main objective. Inaccuracies mainly resulted from three failures: donors failed to integrate explicit 'do no harm' principles, implement adequate gender assessments and design effective gender equality indicators.

To corroborate these results, we conducted a rapid analysis of a cross-section of 14 randomly selected projects from various sectors marked 'significant' for gender in OECD's Creditor Reporting System for 2021. We found that less than half of reported gender investments had

---

14 Among the private foundations that report their financial flows to the OECD, 31 reported their financing for gender equality using the DAC gender marker (OECD, 2021b) equality, corresponding to 25% of financial flows (OECD, 2021b).

15 See, for example, discussion on poor marking for tracking gender-related marking for violence against women in SVRI (2022).

16 For example, the UK reported the same gender equality project differently in four different databases. The same project in Nepal in 2018 was marked as having spent $6.3 million to the OECD database, $5.4 million to IATI, $7 million in UK documentation, and $9.52 million to Nepal's tracking system. See O'Donnell, Farley-Kiwanuka and Holton (2020).

17 Canada, for example, bases its gender marking system on a scale of 0–3, and for ease of reporting later re-codes 1 and 2 as 'significant', and 3 as 'principal' for its OECD reports. See: www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-financement/gender_equality_toolkit-trousse_outils_egalite_genres.aspx?lang=eng#tool_9

18 These donors included AFD, EC, GAC, SIDA, DFID, USAID and the World Bank.

integrated gender in a deliberate way in their high-level goals, project designs and monitoring plans, failing to meet the minimum requirements for the marker. These poorly marked projects, several of which did little more than mention a generalised aim to 'reach women and men', failed to explicitly discuss planned activities to analyse and assess gender dynamics and to integrate gender-specific activities – all requirements for gender-related aid marking.[19]

3.2 Diversion: Plateauing development finance can shift the focus away from gender

Under conditions of stagnating development finance for gender, new development priorities like Covid-19, the global climate emergency and escalating conflicts causing displacement all risk diverting attention and spending to other important causes.

This is especially concerning because of the uncertain foundations of global gender commitments. In an OECD survey of 103 philanthropies, almost 40% could not claim gender as either a primary or secondary focus (OECD, 2021). Even having gender as an objective does not guarantee that it will be taken forward. For example, despite gender equality being a core priority of the World Bank's International Development Association, a survey of IDA recipient government officials found gender equality was among their lowest stated priorities (Prizzon et al., 2022).[20] Diversion also risks giving the upper hand to an increasingly well-financed anti-gender movement.

Given the tendency for the gender marking system to overestimate gender-focused finance, donors may divert resources to other priorities even when there may actually be under-investment in gender equality. In the UK, where an ODA target acts as a spending ceiling and where new priorities such as refugee resettlement have been significantly financed through the ODA budget, this has created downward pressure on gender-focused expenditures.[21]

---

19 For example, an EU-funded programme we reviewed marked 'significant' for gender working to support Albania's justice system did not mention gender in its project design, objectives or monitoring plans, nor were gender-related categories mentioned as a target group or beneficiary. Similarly, a US-funded health programme in the Maldives marked significant included goals to support diverse populations' health but did not incorporate specific plans for identifying and addressing gender dynamics or the gender-specific needs in available documentation.

20 Officials surveyed instead named sectoral areas such as health, education, energy and agriculture as top priorities. See International Development Association (2022).

21 To illustrate, the FCDO made cuts of £1.6 billion to gender-relevant projects between 2019 and 2021, with this cut falling disproportionately on country-based programmes. The reductions came after the UK abandoned its legislated 0.7 ODA/GNI target, but still aimed to meet a 0.5 ODA/GNI target in 2021 (Care and Development Initiatives, 2022).

3.3 Dilution: As commitments to gender are mainstreamed, the challenge of gender washing escalates

Gender mainstreaming recognises gender as an important cause that cuts across all development interventions. The expansion of projects tagged as 'significantly' focused on gender can thus be read as the growth of gender mainstreaming efforts. Nevertheless, due to the problem of distortion in the use of this marker, there is a real risk of gender-washing as marking becomes little more than a 'tick boxing' exercise' (Morgan, 2019; African Development Bank Group, 2011).

Gender concerns 'can be diluted or disappear altogether' if high-quality gender mainstreaming efforts are not invested in and complemented by a set of core and focused activities (Moser and Moser, 2005). A UN Secretary-General report on mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies and programmes across the UN system showed that 49% of the gender units in UN entities reported having multiple, cross-cutting priorities that diluted focus in their support of gender equality.[22]

Altogether, these three risks can collectively undermine gender equality agendas by impacting both the quality and quantity of gender funding.

- **Distortion** can lead funders and those holding them to account to misunderstand the volume of funding that is supporting gender equality aims. This can lead them to allocate funds elsewhere under the false impression that existing funds are already adequately meeting gender-related targets. The effect risks leaving feminist actors and movements under-resourced.
- **Diversion** to other priority issues can undermine progress on gender and risks failing to address the concerns of activists regarding unmet needs of women's movements given the rollback on gender rights.
- **Dilution** can undercut the potential for transformative change for gender equality because it does not encourage directed emphasis on gender and risks gender-washing, while still giving the impression of gender mainstreaming.

22 See https://financingun.report/essay/financing-gender-equality-role-gender-equality-marker-and-financial-targets

4 Ideas for funders

What can be done in light of these trends and possible risks of distorting, diluting and diverting financial commitments for gender? We offer a few ideas for consideration by funders committed to advancing the cause of gender equality.

4.1 Ramp up principal funds for gender

Ramping up *principal* investments to meet the ICRW (2020) target of at least 20% of funds for gender equality could avoid the risk of gender-washing and enable progress towards greater core investment in women's organisations, social movements and multilateral institutions like UN Women. It could also ensure deeper and more sustainable gains in sectors like humanitarian response, which has struggled to deploy emergency-ready interventions targeting women and girls, notwithstanding the well-known gendered impacts of crises (Daigle, 2022).

Efforts to ensure deeper engagement with gender could also link to the wider agenda of feminist foreign policy, which is pushing for gender's prioritisation in policy areas like security, trade and energy. Well-meaning attempts to bring gender into sectors where it is not usually applied will fail to achieve desired results if these efforts are spread thinly. Depth of focus can steer attention towards the place of gender in governments' foreign and domestic agendas to ensure countries 'walk their talk' (Habte, 2022).

All donors could consider the role they play in supporting an expansion of principally focused funding. For gender-focused philanthropies, this could include leveraging influencing opportunities to encourage and support counterparts not focused on gender to dedicate funding to gender equality programmes. It is also worth reflecting on whether funders should adopt a joint target for principal-focused gender investment to steer their investment portfolios.

4.2 Expand high-quality gender work within climate finance

Deepening engagement with gender beyond traditional development sectors such as education and economic empowerment into climate and sustainability arenas offers an opportunity to engage new actors, including environmental and women's human rights defenders, and find common cause with climate activists.

Currently, less than 3% of bilateral climate-related ODA is focused on gender as a principal objective, and ramping up climate finance may not incentivise growing more robust gender-focused investment. Philanthropic funders should be looking at how their portfolios could engage at the intersection of climate and gender in a way that is complementary to engagement with official donors, but also pushes them to embrace feminist ideals of localisation, flexible modalities and greater support for women's organisations and movements.[23]

An inventory of climate and gender investments across the public and philanthropic spaces could help direct engagement to areas where needs are greatest, including helping women protect their lives and livelihoods from exposure to flooding and storms,[24] tackling the gendered repercussions of the transition to a low-carbon economy,[25] addressing gender-based violence arising from the compounding effects of a changing climate, or championing women's leadership and advancement in government (Gloor, 2022; UNFCCC, 2022; NDC Partnership, 2019). These efforts could draw on a range of existing initiatives, networks and tools, or support production of new opportunities and resources (see CDKN and WEDO, 2021).

4.3 Harness the collective energies of philanthropic and public donors

ODA and philanthropic capital have typically operated in parallel. Although there is growing momentum to collaborate and cooperate within the philanthropic and official donor community, working across these spaces has been challenging.

Several convening arenas hold promise for greater engagement across the public and philanthropic interface. The Network of Foundations Working for Development (netFWD) connects philanthropic leaders to policymakers and OECD experts under three working groups focused on gender, education and health. Alongside, pooled financing mechanisms that are separately mobilising revenues from philanthropy (Co-Impact Fund) and government (Equality Fund[26]) are increasingly seeking to cohere and complement the other's efforts.[27]

Why is collaboration important? At one level, it could help mitigate the diversion threat by supporting coordination around investment in areas vulnerable to counter-agendas. Collective engagement could also help address gaps in finance in specific geographies and at the sub-sectoral level, while also pushing funders to provide more core, predictable finance both for local women's organisations and for a better functioning global gender architecture. It could facilitate conversations on a twin-track strategy that balances the goals of gender mainstreaming with

23 For example, see USAID's Gender responsive climate action plan (2021).
24 www.iied.org/climate-change-costing-rural-women-bangladesh-30-their-outgoings
25 https://glowprogramme.org/about
26 The Equality Fund was created in 2019 with $300 in seed money from the Government of Canada to advance women's rights and feminist movements through a combination of grant-making and gender investments. The Equality Fund had been intended initially as a fund to advance cooperation across governments and philanthropies by leveraging at least $80 million in contributions in its first five years (AWID, 2020). Recent annual reports suggest it has mainly been a pooled fund for public money with the UK announcing recently a £33 million contribution. It is not clear from public records how many other bilateral governments or philanthropic actors are investing.
27 www.alliancemagazine.org/blog/seizing-the-global-moment-to-advance-gender-equality/

dedicated programmatic efforts. Assuming the challenges of working together can be overcome, uniting the independent voice of private philanthropy with the financial power of government would generate impact for gender greater than the sum of the individual parts.

4.4 Ensure a transformative gender marking system

Of the private foundations that report their financial flows to the OECD, 31 use the DAC gender marker system to self-report the gender commitments (not disbursements) of their projects and programmes (OECD, 2021b). This three-point scoring system codes initiatives on intentions at the design stage where significant and principal (score 1 and 2) are counted as gender equality focused investments. A score of zero means a project has been screened but is not targeting gender. The marker is applied to an entire project or programme based on an assessment of the overall objectives of the activity, even if gender equality is only one of the project's objectives. The value of all projects marked 1 and 2 is counted as total gender equality focused finance.[28]

The Rio climate marking system, while not without its problems, offers a template for how greater nuance might be introduced to the gender marking system. With gender projects marked 'significant', 100% of the project is regarded as having a gender focus, notwithstanding the problems of distortion and dilution.

In contrast, two markers exist to track bilateral climate finance commitments: climate adaptation and mitigation,[29] with each having a principal or significant focus.[30] These markers are never applied to the entire value of any project marked 'significant'. While Rio Marker 2 projects (principal) will usually be counted as 100% of overall project volume, Rio Marker 1 projects (significant) can vary by donor between 30% and 100%, with the bulk of donors using a coefficient within the 40–50% range (Calleja, 2021; Oxfam, 2022). While this creates the problem of inconsistent coefficients across donors and can still exaggerate the amount of climate spending, it is even so a finer-grained approach to estimating 'degrees of significance' than the current gender marking system.

Introducing greater variation within the gender marking system, especially for the vast number of projects coded as 'significant', offers an important way to capture and document the full spectrum of gender-transformative activities, which can range from gender sensitive to gender

28 This is even though the DAC cautions against using the markers as a quantitative tool, pointing out that will never provide an exact quantification of gender quality spending (OECD 2016).

29 Because a project can be simultaneously marked as both climate change mitigation and adaptation, they cannot be aggregated like gender marked projects to get total bilateral climate ODA.

30 Activities are deemed to have a 'principal' climate objective when climate change mitigation or adaptation 'is explicitly stated as fundamental in the design of, or the motivation for, the activity', and a 'significant' objective when climate mitigation or adaptation is stated but is not the primary reason for undertaking the activity.

transformative (Pedersen, Greaves and Poole, 2014). This could offer more accurate reporting of the full spectrum of donor ambitions for their gender investments than is possible within the current three-point marker system.

The time has come to bring together a coalition of actors to debate alternatives and consider reforms to the OECD gender marking system. Reforming the standard would create a more robust measure of what constitutes 'gender analysis'.[31] It could develop and advocate for new and improved tracking systems based on additional feminist metrics, explicitly tracking whether funding reaches movements, tackles gender norms, ensures projects 'do no harm', supports women-led/ localised approaches, and responds to calls for longer- term, core support. Defining a finer-grained standard would reward investments that are truly engaged with core transformative goals. This would likely better hold actors to account for their efforts in addressing the root causes of gender-based inequalities, as well as recognise and develop awareness of good practices.

31 OECD defines gender analysis as an activity that 'highlights the differences between and among women and men, girls and boys in terms of their relative distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints and power in a given context'.

5 Conclusion

Gender-related development financing has increased thanks to the efforts of the global women's movement. Although gender-related financing has grown significantly over the past 20 years, these increases primarily reflect the mainstreaming of gender as an idea, rather than suggestive of more focused, dedicated programming.

Moreover, plateauing ODA, new global priorities and the rise in well-financed anti-gender movements suggest an elevated risk of losing progress achieved on gender equality, let alone moving the frontiers of achievement forward.

Official financial efforts may not be effective at achieving global gender equality aims as they are shaped by dynamics and risks related to *distortion*, *dilution* and *diversion* that impinge on both the quality and quantity of gender-focused finance. Efforts to increase development finance for gender need to understand these risks and consider how to anchor gender as a principal objective, link with climate in a more direct and explicit fashion, offer greater nuance within the gender marking system and consider how best to harness the collective efforts of all actors.

References

Amin, S. and Yahaya, D. (2023) 'Gender impact investing & the rise of false solutions: an analysis for feminist movements'. AWID (www.awid.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/AWID_GII_report_1-17-23-EN_0.pdf).

African Development Bank Group (2011) 'Mainstreaming gender equality: a road to nowhere or a road to results?'. May (www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dcdndep/48372066.pdf).

AWID (2020) *High hopes and high expectations: Feminist Movement Recommendations to the Equality Fund.* (www.awid.org/publications/high-hopes-and-high-expectations-resourcing-feminist-movements-recommendations)

Calleja, R. (2021) *How do development agencies support climate action?*. CGG Working Paper.

CARE and Development Initiatives (2021) *UK leadership on gender equality globally: a quantitative review.*

Chenoweth, E. and Marks, Z. (2022) 'Revenge of the patriarchs' *Foreign Affairs* (www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-02-08/women-rights-revenge-patriarchs).

Craviotto, N. and Ravenscroft, J. (2023) 'Rich countries increasingly the recipients of their own aid'. Eurodad. 12 April (www.eurodad.org/oecd_aid_statistics_april_2023).

CKDN and WEDO (2021) 'Guide to strengthening gender integration in climate finance projects'. (https://cdkn.org/resource/guide-strengthening-gender-integration-in-climate-finance-projects)

Data2x (2021) 'The state of gender financing' (https://data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/State-of-Gender-Data-Financing-2021_FINAL.pdf).

Datta, N. (2021) 'Tip of the Iceberg'. European Parliamentary Forum (www.epfweb.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/Tip%20of%20the%20Iceberg%20August%202021%20Final.pdf).

DAC-CSO Reference Group (2023) 'It's not enough and it's not ODA' (www.dac-csoreferencegroup.com/post/it-s-not-enough-and-it-s-not-oda-with-global-crises-growing-in-scale-and-severity-oda-levels-must).

Dalberg global development advisors (forthcoming) " Independent Review of the UN System's Capacity to Deliver on Gender Equality."

Daigle, M. (2022) *Gender, power and principles in humanitarian action*. ODI (https://odi.org/en/publications/gender-power-and-principles-in-humanitarian-action/).

Derbyshire, H. (2012) 'Gender mainstreaming: recognizing and building on progress' *Gender & Development* 20(3): 405–422.

Economist Impact (2023) 'Gender equality and climate change are not separate challenges' (https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/social-sustainability/gender-inequality-and-climate-change-are-not-separate-challenges).

George, R. and Harper, C. (2022) Women's organizations and feminist mobilisation. London: ODI (https://odi.org/en/publications/womens-organisations-and-feminist-mobilisation-supporting-the-foundational-drivers-of-gender-equality/).

Grabowski, A. and Essick, P. (2020) 'Are they really gender equality projects? An examination of donors' gender-equality focused projects to assess the quality of gender-marked projects' (https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620945/rr-are-they-really-gender-equality-projects-donors-050220-en.pdf?sequence=1).

Gloor, J. et al. (2022) 'We can't fight climate change without fighting for gender equality' *Harvard Business Review* (https://hbr.org/2022/07/we-cant-fight-climate-change-without-fighting-for-gender-equity).

Habte, F. (2022) 'Realizing a feminist foreign policy means taking internal (in)security seriously' (https://gppi.net/2022/12/20/realizing-a-feminist-foreign-policy-means-taking-internal-insecurity-seriously).

Haug, S, Gulrajani, N. and Weinlich, S. (2022) 'International organizations and differentiated universality: reinvigorating assessed contributions in United Nations funding' *Global Perspectives* 3(1).

ICRW – International Center for Research on Women (2020) 'All foreign policy spending should take gender into account' (www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/All-Foreign-Policy-Spending-Should-Take-Gender-into-Account_12.2020.pdf).

ICRW (2017) 'Financing for gender equality: towards a more feminist United Nations' (www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Financing-for-Gender-Equality-FINAL-7.14.pdf).

International Development Association (2022) 'Building back better from the crisis: toward a green, resilient and inclusive future' (https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/163861645554924417/pdf/IDA20-Building-Back-Better-from-the-Crisis-Toward-a-Green-Resilient-and-Inclusive-Future.pdf).

Lever, E., Miller, K. and Staszewska, K. (2020) 'Moving more money to the drivers of change: how bilateral and multilateral funders can resource feminist movements'. AWID and Mama Cash (www.mamacash.org/media/publications/movingmoremoney_mama_cash_awid_cmi.pdf).

Miller, M., Roger, L., Cao, Y. and Prizzon, A. (2023) *Where has the money come from to finance rising climate ambition?*. London: ODI (https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/DPF_EA_Where_has_the_money_come_from_to_finance_rising_climate_ambition_UEXBuVX.pdf).

Mitchell, I., Ritchie, E. and Tahmabesi, A. (2021) 'Is climate finance towards $100 billion "new and additional?"' (www.cgdev.org/publication/climate-finance-towards-100-billion-new-and-additional).

Morgan, R. (2019) 'How to take gender and health beyond ticking boxes' Apolitical. 9 September (https://apolitical.co/solution-articles/en/how-to-take-gender-and-health-beyond-ticking-boxes).

Moser, C. and Moser, A. (2005) 'Gender mainstreaming since Beijing: a review of success and limitations in international institutions' citing March, C., I. Smyth and M. Mukhopadhyay (1999) *A Guide to Gender-Analysis Frameworks*, Oxford: Oxfam GB.

NDC Partnership (2019) 'Mainstreaming gender into climate action: lessons from Peru'. May (https://api.knack.com/v1/applications/5b23f04fd240aa37e01fa362/download/asset/5ceee8ace77c0600006bd5eb5/mainstreaming_gender_into_climate_action_lessons_from_peru.pdf).

Norris, A. (2022) 'Renewing the global architecture for gender equality'. Council on Foreign Relations.

Novovic, G. (2021) 'Canada's international assistance: underfunded feminist ambitions' (https://realityofaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Canadas-international-assistance.pdf).

O'Donnell, M., Farley-Kiwanuka, A. and Holton, J. (2020) 'Donor financing for gender equality: spending with confusing receipts'. Center for Global Development. 18 September (www.cgdev.org/blog/donor-financing-gender-equality-spending-confusing-receipts).

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2016) *Handbook on the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker*.

OECD (2021a) *Private philanthropy for development – second edition* (www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/private-philanthropy-for-development-second-edition_cdf37f1e-en).

OECD (2021b) 'Development finance for gender equality: the Generation Equality Forum Action Coalitions'.

OECD (2022) 'Development finance for gender-responsive climate action'. March.

OECD (2022) 'Blended finance for gender equality' (www.oecd.org/dac/2022-blended-finance-gender-equality.pdf).

OECD (2023) 'Official Development Assistance for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: a snapshot' (www.oecd.org/dac/snapshot-oda-gender-2023.pdf).

OECD netFWD (2019) *Insights on philanthropy for gender equality*. Paris: OECD Development Centre (www.oecd.org/development/networks/Final_Gender_WG_Policy_Note_7319.pdf).

Oxfam (2022) *Climate Finance Short-changed; The real value of the $100 billion commitment in 2019-2020.* (https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/climate-finance-short-changed-the-real-value-of-the-100-billion-commitment-in-2-621426/)

Pedersen, A., Greaves, L. and Poole, N. (2014) 'Gender transformative health promotion for women: a framework for action' *Health Promotion International* (www.researchgate.net/publication/265791490_Gender-transformative_health_promotion_for_women_A_framework_for_action).

Prizzon, A., Josten, M. and Gyuzalyan, H. (2022) *Country perspectives on multilateral development banks: a survey analysis*. London: ODI (https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/Country_perspectives_on_MDBs_-_a_survey_analysis.pdf).

Ryan, F. (2019) 'Separating climate finance and ODA' *Dev Policy* (https://devpolicy.org/separating-climate-finance-and-oda-20190424/).

Sanders, R. (2018) 'Norm spoiling: undermining the international women's rights agenda' *International Affairs* 94(2).

Shake the Table and Bridgespan Group (2022) 'Lighting the way: a report for philanthropy' (www.bridgespan.org/insights/philanthropy-and-feminist-movements).

SVRI – Sexual Violence Research Initiative (2022) 'Tracking the funding flows: funding for research on violence against women in low- and middle-income countries'. Sexual Violence Research Initiative.

SVRI (2022) 'Tracking funding for VAW in LMICS: research report' (www.svri.org/tracking-funding-for-vaw-research).

Tant, E. and Jimenez Rodriguez, D. (2022) *How to partner with feminist funds for transformative change*. London: ODI (https://odi.org/en/publications/how-to-partner-with-feminist-movements-for-transformative-change/).

Twitter – Thread by Ian Mitchell (12 April 2023). Available at https://twitter.com/EconMitch/status/1646202569792929793

UN ECOSOC – Economic and Social Council (2021) Implementation of GA Resolution 75/233. Report of the Secretary General (www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/2021doc/2021-SG-Report-on-the-QCPR-Addendum-Funding-analysis_add_1.pdf).

UN ECOSOC (2017) Report: Dalberg – System-wide outline of the functions and capacities of the UN System. Available at www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/qcpr/sg-report-dalberg_unds-outline-of-functions-and-capacities-june-2017.pdf

UN General Assembly and ECOSOC (2021) 'Implementation of General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system: Report of the Secretary-General', A/76/75–E/2021/57, 26 April 2021 (https://undocs. org/A/76/75).
UN Women (n.d.) 'Overall distribution of UN Women programme expenses by impact areas'.
UN Women and UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund (2020) 'Funding for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian programming' (www.unfpa.org/ publications/ funding-gender-equality-and-empowerment-women-and-girls- humanitarian-programming).
UNFCCC – UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (2022) 'Why women's leadership is key to climate action' (https://climatechampions.unfccc.int/why-womens-leadership-is-key-to-climate-action/).