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**MORE THAN A LABEL, LESS THAN A REVOLUTION:
SWEDEN'S FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY**

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More Than a Label, Less Than a Revolution: Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy

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The Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA)

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Foreword by EBA

In 2014, Sweden became the first country in the world to declare a feminist foreign policy (FFP). This was to permeate the entire foreign service and all three areas of foreign policy: foreign and security policy, development cooperation, and trade and promotion. Since then, FFP has diffused internationally and several other countries have adopted their own versions while the new Swedish Government in 2022 announced the retraction of the FFP.

Questions at the center of the debate about the FFP include if the re-labeling of foreign policy as feminist has had any tangible effects and if the policy has made a difference for the extent and methods of Swedish gender equality work. This report explores these questions, focusing on the bilateral implementation of the policy. Based on a variety of methods and large amounts of data, it concludes that the FFP, indeed, constituted more than a label. Overall, the gender equality activities of Swedish public agencies and embassies clearly increased as a result of the FFP. Moreover, the feminist term signaled raised ambitions and pushed the integration of Swedish aid, trade, and security policy. However, due to weak steering and guidance, implementation was incomplete and uneven across foreign policy areas, public agencies, and embassies.

We hope that this report will find its audience among the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, embassies, Sida and riksdagen, as well as policy makers and the general public interested in feminist foreign policy in Sweden and abroad. The study has been conducted with support from a reference group chaired by Sara Johansson de Silva.

The authors are solely responsible for the content of the report.

Stockholm, August 2023



Torbjörn Becker, EBA Chair



Sara Johansson de Silva

Sammanfattning

Denna rapport innehåller en första systematisk bedömning av implementeringen av den svenska feministiska utrikespolitiken över tid och inom olika politikområden, med fokus på bilateralt utvecklingsamarbete. Den svenska feministiska utrikespolitiken (FUP) lanserades 2014 som den första uttryckligen *feministiska* utrikespolitiken i världen. Sedan dess har ett dussintal andra regeringar följt efter. Förutom att införa feministisk terminologi på högsta utrikespolitiska nivå var FUP banbrytande för svensk utrikespolitik i minst två avseenden. För det första riktade den sig till samtliga utrikespolitiska områden inom och under Utrikesdepartementet (UD). Medan den svenska utvecklingspolitiken hade införlivat jämställdhetsmål i årtionden, stakade FUP ut en ny riktning för politik och säkerhet samt för handel och främjande. För det andra skulle FUP involvera hela utrikesförvaltningen, inklusive de myndigheter som genomför utrikespolitiken och de mer än 100 ambassader och delegationer som representerar Sverige i bilaterala och multilaterala forum runt om i världen.

En utgångspunkt för rapporten är att politik inte genomför sig själv. Politiska deklARATIONER och policydokument måste aktivt genomföras, det vill säga tolkas och omsättas i konkret praktik av tjänstemän, i myndigheter och på ambassader, som konkretiserar och gör något (eller inte) av de politiska målen. Den övergripande frågan som står i centrum för denna rapport är därför: Med tanke på det otroligt komplexa svenska utrikespolitiska maskineriet, med långt över hundra relativt autonoma implementerande myndigheter i Sverige och runt om i världen, **vad hände med FUP i den bilaterala implementeringen? Förvandlades högtravande deklARATIONER och feministisk terminologi till praktisk handling? I så fall, inom vilka politikområden och på vilket sätt?** De mer specificerade frågorna listas i slutet av denna sammanfattning, tillsammans med ett kort svar på varje fråga.

För att besvara dessa frågor följer studien den bilaterala implementeringskedjan från regeringen till (a) de Sverigebaserade statliga myndigheterna och till (b) svenska ambassader runt om i världen som har till uppgift att genomföra FUP i specifika nationella sammanhang. Rapporten omfattar perioden 2008–2022, för att bedöma om det skett någon förändring (och i så fall vilken typ av förändring) i den utrikespolitiska praktiken efter införandet av FUP 2014. I enlighet med utlysningen från Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys (EBA) fokuserar rapporten på bilateralt utvecklings-samarbete med partnerländer och lägger implementeringen av FUP i multilaterala sammanhang åt sidan.

Rapporten bygger på ett antal både kvalitativa och kvantitativa analyser. För att undersöka implementeringen bland svenska myndigheter under UD har vi samlat in och analyserat hundratals instruktioner, anslagsanvisningar, ägardirektiv, verksamhetsplaner och årsrapporter från 2008–2022. Vi har också genomfört 10 intervjuer med nyckelpersoner på dessa myndigheter. Analysen av svenska ambassaders implementering i länder med svenskt biståndssamarbete kombinerade olika typer av data och metoder: en stor enkät som gick ut till diplomater och lokalanställd programpersonal vid alla svenska ambassader och generalkonsulat, fallstudier av två ambassader, inklusive ett dussintal semistrukturerade intervjuer, ambassaddokument från 2008–2022 och en enkät till ambassadernas direkta samarbetspartners (för att få synpunkter utifrån). Vi intervjuade också utrikesministrarna och ledningen för utrikesministeriet med ansvar för FUP 2014–2022.

Huvudresultat

Vår viktigaste slutsats är att genomförandet av FUP bestod av mycket mer än att bara döpa om befintlig jämställdhetsverksamhet till ”feministisk”, men att genomförandet var ojämnt och ofullständigt. På det hela taget skedde en markant ökning av jämställdhetsarbete i utrikespolitiska myndigheter och på biståndssambassader efter det att

FUP lanserades. Det fanns också en markant variation i hur FUP implementerades, liksom i hur mycket och om den alls genomfördes. Även om det var svårt att missa regeringens budskap att FUP var en prioritering som berörde alla utrikespolitiska aktörer, så tolkades och prioriterades samma budskap på olika sätt av olika aktörer, delvis beroende på deras tidigare engagemang för jämställdhet. Sammantaget ökade dock jämställdhetsverksamheten markant. Även den feministiska terminologin i sig fick konsekvenser och signalerade en nystart, högre ambitioner och en mer stridbar inställning till jämställdhet mellan könen.

1. Vilka FUP-direktiv gav den svenska regeringen till utrikespolitiska myndigheter och ambassader?

Regeringsdirektiven betonade jämställdhet mer kraftfullt efter 2014 och framåt än före FUP.

- Regeringen begärde främst att mer jämställdhetsarbete skulle utföras, snarare än identifierade nya typer av arbete. Med det sagt var användandet av feministisk terminologi ny, liksom inkluderandet av jämställdhetsmål i handelspolitiken.
- Regeringsdirektiven var i allmänhet abstrakta och öppna, vilket gav myndigheter och ambassader stor frihet att bestämma hur och i vilken utsträckning FUP skulle genomföras.
- Generellt ombads myndigheterna och ambassaderna att utföra mer jämställdhetsarbete utan ytterligare finansiering. De förväntades alltså omfördela befintliga resurser och/eller utföra befintlig verksamhet på nya sätt för att uppnå målen i den nya politiken.
- Inspektionen för strategiska produkter (ISP) var den enda myndighet under UD vars regeringsdirektiv inte innehöll några jämställdhetsmål alls efter 2014.

2. Gjorde myndigheter och ambassader mer för att främja jämställdhet efter att FUP deklarerats än tidigare?

Ja: Som svar på regeringens anvisningar ökade myndigheterna och biståndsambassaderna sin jämställdhetsverksamhet efter att FUP lanserades.

- Alla myndigheter utom ISP engagerade sig i mer jämställdhetsverksamhet efter 2014 än tidigare.
- Biståndsambassaderna arbetade också klart mer med jämställdhetsfrågor efter lanseringen av den gemensamma feministiska utrikespolitiken.
- Stödstrukturer för genomförandet av politiken, t.ex. fokalpunkter för jämställdhetsfrågor, fanns ibland redan på plats i biståndsambassadernas utvecklingsavdelningar innan FUP lanserades. Antalet ökade efter FUP infördes, då UD ombad *alla* ambassader att inrätta en fokalpunkt. Ungefär 70 % av personalen vid biståndsambassaderna rapporterade att de hade en fokalpunkt för jämställdhet under 2022. Det är en ansevärd andel men avviker ändå väsentligt från UD:s mål (huruvida detta beror på att det inte fanns någon fokalpunkt eller att personalen inte visste om att det fanns en fokalpunkt är oklart).
- 55 % av den svenska ambassadpersonalen rapporterade att de hade fått utbildning i jämställdhet och/eller utbildning om FUP. 45 % av personalen rapporterade att de inte hade fått någon utbildning om jämställdhet eller FUP alls. Huruvida detta är mycket är lite beror på jämförelsepunkten. Då FUP skulle genomsyra all utrikespolitik och alla aktörers arbete kan det anses anmärkningsvärt att 45 % inte fått någon sådan utbildning alls.

3. Ledde FUP till att svenska myndigheter och ambassader bedrev jämställdhetsarbete på ett nytt sätt? Om så är fallet, vilka nya metoder användes?

Till största delen nej; även om vi inte systematiskt kunde klassificera och bedöma de metoder som användes över tid är vår kvalificerade slutsats att FUP i sig inte medförde nya metoder.

- Som kollektiv förlitade sig myndigheter och ambassader på alla fyra av våra breda kategorier av metoder för att uppnå FUP-målen: de tillhandahöll (1) finansiering, (2) utbildning, (3) fakta och information samt (4) normativ argumentation (normfrämjande) för att stödja jämställdhet. Vissa myndigheter och ambassadsektioner förlitade sig dock mer på vissa av dessa metoder än på andra.
- Personalen vid biståndsambassaderna rapporterade att normfrämjande åtgärder var den vanligaste metoden för att främja jämställdhet.
- Det var inte möjligt att systematiskt klassificera och bedöma på vilket sätt de metoder som myndigheterna och ambassaderna använder sig av kan ha förändrats efter 2014. Årsrapporter och verksamhetsplaner skiljde sig för mycket åt i form, förändrades för mycket över tid och var inte tillräckligt konkreta för att man skulle kunna göra en systematisk jämförelse av jämställdhetsrelaterad verksamhet mellan olika myndigheter/ambassader och över tid.
- Vår kvalificerade övergripande slutsats är ändå att FUP inte i första hand innebar nya metoder i sig. Med detta sagt krävde tillämpningen av befintliga jämställdhetsmetoder på handelsfrågor viss innovation. FUP innebar också nya sätt att uppmärksamma och formulera jämställdhet, nämligen genom användning av begreppet ”feministisk” och ”de tre R:n”.¹

¹ De tre R:n var ett begrepp som sammanfattade FUP:ens fokus på lika rättigheter, representation och resurser mellan män och kvinnor.

4. På vilket sätt, om något, skilde sig genomförandet åt mellan de tre politikområdena (utrikes- och säkerhetspolitik, utveckling samt handel och främjande)? Innebar FUP gemensamma åtgärder och samordning mellan dessa politikområden?

Genomförandet av FUP var inte jämnt mellan de tre politikområdena. FUP bidrog till gemensamma åtgärder och samordning mellan områdena.

- Myndigheter och ambassadsektioner som ägnar sig åt utveckling gjorde mer jämställdhetsarbete innan den gemensamma feministiska utrikespolitiken lanserades än myndigheter och ambassadsektioner som ägnar sig åt handel och främjande eller säkerhet. Anställda som arbetade med utvecklingsfrågor engagerade sig i ännu mer jämställdhetsarbete efter det att FUP lanserades. Andra politikområden kom aldrig ikapp utvecklingspolitiken.
- Myndigheter och ambassadsektioner som ägnar sig åt handel och främjande bedrev mycket lite jämställdhetsarbete innan FUP infördes. I detta avseende skedde den största förändringen inom detta politikområde, eftersom aktörerna inom handel och främjande därmed började arbeta med jämställdhetsmål.
- Förändringarna inom säkerhetspolitiken är blandade. Mycket av det som kan betraktas som säkerhetspolitik genomförs av Försvarsdepartementet och omfattas därför inte av den feministiska utrikespolitiken. ISP lyder under UD och är verksam både inom säkerhets- och handelsområdet. Vi hittade inga bevis för någon förändring av inriktningen mot något som helst jämställdhetsarbete inom ISP. Å andra sidan såg Folke Bernadotteakademin (FBA) – en myndighet som spänner över säkerhet och utveckling – en betydande ökning av sitt jämställdhetsrelaterade arbete efter 2014.

- Som ett nytt paraplybegrepp för alla utrikespolitiska områden kom begreppet ”feministisk” att fungera som en drivkraft för att integrera svensk bistånds-, handels- och säkerhetspolitik. Detta var tydligt på vissa svenska ambassader. Hur stor drivkraft den innebar ligger utanför ramen för denna rapport att fastställa.

5. Vad säger analyserna om hur en feministisk ”etikett” påverkar utrikespolitiken?

FUP-etiketten användes främst för att buteljera gammalt vin i nya flaskor – ”feminism” användes som ett nytt sätt att presentera sådant som tidigare kallats ”jämsällldhet”.

- Den feministiska terminologin blev aldrig dominerande inom den svenska utrikesförvaltningen och de utrikespolitiska myndigheterna. I synnerhet fortsatte utvecklingsmyndigheterna och ambassadernas utvecklingssektioner att arbeta med ”jämsällldhet” snarare än ”feministisk” terminologi.
- Vår ambassadundersökning visar att ”feminism” användes av ungefär 25 %, och ”de tre R:en” användes av ungefär 50 %, av biståndsambassadpersonalen som arbetade med normfrämjande. Huruvida detta är mycket eller lite är svårt att bedöma. Givet att ”feminism” är ett kontroversiellt begrepp i många sammanhang kan 25 % ses som relativt mycket. Om förväntningen i stället är att all ambassadpersonal i biståndsländer skulle använda ”feminism” i sitt normfrämjande arbete så är andelen låg.
- Feministisk terminologi verkar ha använts oftare av den politiska ledningen och ambassadörer än av andra delar av utrikesförvaltningen och myndigheterna.

FUP var dock aldrig bara en etikett. Ord har betydelse, och övergången till FUP-språket tjänade minst fyra ytterligare syften i svensk utrikespolitik.

1. FUP-etiketten signalerade på ett kraftfullt sätt regeringens högre ambitioner i arbetet med jämställdhet i utrikespolitiken.
2. FUP-etiketten bidrog till att stärka det svenska internationella ledarskapet i jämställdhetsfrågor.
3. FUP-etiketten ökade spänningarna med könskonservativa krafter.
4. FUP-etiketten bidrog till att konceptuellt samla handel, bistånd och säkerhetspolitik under ett paraplybegrepp.

Rapporten avslutas med några **avslutande reflektioner** om ytterligare två övergripande teman som är centrala för implementeringen av FUP: styrningen av FUP och dess bestående värde nu när den har dragits tillbaka. När det gäller styrningen konstaterar vi att implementeringen av politiken i grunden formades av dess lösa vertikala styrning: den feministiska utrikespolitiken var en bred ”approach” vars innehåll skulle specificeras av de implementerande aktörerna själva. Detta resulterade i en stor mångfald i genomförandet bland de många relativt autonoma implementerande aktörerna i svensk utrikespolitik. Vi noterar också förekomsten av många styrningsdirektiv, om jämställdhet och om andra mål: ur de implementerande aktörernas perspektiv är själva mängden mål, direktiv och styrsignaler ofta överväldigande och svår att navigera. Vi tror att implementeringen av FUP hade förbättrats om regeringen hade tillhandahållit lite mer skräddarsydd vägledning för varje specifik myndighet och ambassad.

När det gäller FUP:ens bestående värde är det viktigt att komma ihåg att en rad andra nationella och internationella lagar och förordningar fortsätter att ställa jämställdhetskrav på innehållet i den svenska utrikespolitiken. Detta förändras inte bara för att FUP som sådan dras tillbaka. Men vi tror att det kan finnas vissa bestående effekter av de åtta åren med FUP. För det första kommer en del av lärandet,

den ökade uppmärksamheten på jämställdhet och känslan av att investera i genusfrågor bland svenska utrikespolitiska aktörer säkert att bestå, åtminstone under en tid. På det multilaterala planet bidrog de svenska FUP-insatserna till införandet av jämställdhetsklausuler i internationella avtal och andra internationella åtaganden. Dessa finns kvar och fortsätter att ställa krav på svensk utrikespolitik, även om FUP har dragits tillbaka. Slutligen har ungefär ett dussin andra stater följt det svenska initiativet och deklarerat egna FUP, däribland Kanada, Frankrike, Tyskland och Mexiko. En FUP+-grupp skapades 2022, och det finns en mobilisering inom civilsamhället för FUP i olika delar av världen. Den internationella dynamiken kring FUP hänger med andra ord inte längre på Sveriges utrikespolitik.

En mer detaljerad sammanfattning av svaren finns i rapportens appendix som publicerats digitalt: <https://eba.se/en/reports/>

Summary

This report delivers a first systematic assessment of the implementation of the Swedish feminist foreign policy (FFP) over time and across policy areas, with a focus on bilateral development relations. The Swedish FFP was declared in 2014, as the first expressly *feminist* foreign policy in the world, which has since prompted a dozen other governments to follow suit. In addition to introducing feminist terminology at the highest level of foreign policy, the FFP was ground-breaking in Swedish foreign policy in at least two respects. For one, it was directed to all foreign policy areas of the foreign ministry. Whereas Swedish development policy had incorporated gender equality aims for decades, the FFP staked out a new direction for politics & security and for trade & promotion. Second, the FFP was to involve the entire foreign service and more, including not just the foreign ministry but also the public agencies executing foreign policy and the more than 100 embassies and delegations that represent Sweden in bilateral and multilateral fora around the world.

A point of departure for this report is that policy is never self-executing. Original policy declarations need to be implemented, i.e. interpreted and put into concrete practice by civil servants in bureaucratic agencies and embassies that concretize and make something (or not) of policy aims. The overarching question at the center of this report is: given the incredibly complex Swedish foreign policy machinery, with well over one hundred relatively autonomous implementing actors in Sweden and around the world, **what happened to the FFP in bilateral implementation practice? Were lofty declarations and feminist terminology converted into practical action? If so, in which policy areas and in what ways?** The more specified questions are listed at the end of this summary, along with a brief answer to each question.

To address these questions, the study follows the bilateral implementation chain from the government to (a) the Sweden-based government agencies and to (b) Swedish embassies around the world that are tasked with implementing the FFP in specific national contexts. The report covers the period 2008–2022, to assess whether there were changes in Swedish foreign policy practice after the introduction of the FFP in 2014 (and if so, what kinds of changes). As specified in the call by the Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA), the report focuses on bilateral relations and leaves the implementation of the FFP in multilateral contexts aside.

The report relies on a large amount of both qualitative and quantitative data. To examine implementation by Swedish government agencies, we collected and analyzed hundreds of instructions, appropriation directions, owner directives, operational plans and annual reports from 2008–2022. We also conducted 10 interviews with key agency staff. The analysis of the implementation by Swedish embassies in development partner countries combined multiple data and methods: a large survey to all diplomats and locally employed program officers at all Swedish embassies and consulates general; case studies of two embassies, including a dozen semi-structured interviews, embassy documents from 2008–2022, and a survey of direct partners to the embassies (to get some outside views). We also interviewed the foreign ministers and MFA leadership in charge of the FFP 2014–2022.

Main findings:

Our main conclusion is that FFP-implementation consisted of much more than simply re-labeling existing gender equality activities as “feminist”, but that implementation was uneven and incomplete. Overall, there was a marked increase in gender equality work among foreign policy agencies and aid embassies after the FFP was launched. There was also marked variation in *how* the FFP was implemented, as well as in *how much* and even *if* it was implemented. While the government’s message that FFP was a priority that concerned all foreign policy actors was hard to miss, the same

message was interpreted and prioritized differently by different actors, partly depending on their previous engagement with gender equality. In total, gender equality activities increased markedly during the FFP years, however. The feminist terminology itself also had consequences, signaling a new start, greater ambitions and a more combative stance on gender equality.

1. What FFP directives did the Swedish government give foreign policy agencies and embassies?

Government directives emphasized gender equality more forcefully after 2014 and onwards than before the FFP.

- The government mostly asked that *more* gender equality work be carried out, rather than identify *new kinds* of work. That said, the use of feminist terminology was new, and so was the inclusion of gender equality goals for trade policy.
- Government directives were generally abstract and open-ended, leaving much autonomy to agencies and embassies to determine how and how much the FFP would be implemented.
- By and large, agencies and embassies were asked to do more gender equality work without any additional funding. They were thus expected to redistribute existing resources differently and/or carry out existing activities in new ways in order to pursue FFP goals.
- The Inspectorate of Strategic Products (ISP) was the only foreign policy agency whose government directives did not include any gender equality goals at all after 2014.

2. Did agencies and embassies do more to promote gender equality after the FFP was declared than previously?

Yes: in response to government directions, foreign policy agencies and aid embassies stepped up their gender equality activities after the FFP was launched.

- All the agencies except for the ISP engaged in more gender equality activities after 2014 than they did before.
- Aid embassies also clearly worked more with gender equality issues after the launch of the FFP.
- Support structures for FFP implementation, such as Gender Focal Points (GFPs), were sometimes already in place in development sections of aid embassies before the FFP was launched. The number increased after the launch of the FFP, as the MFA asked *all* embassies to appoint a GFP. Roughly 70% of aid embassy staff reported having a GFP in 2022. This is a notable share, but it falls significantly short of the MFA goal (whether it falls short because there was no GFP or because staff were unaware of the GFP is unclear).
- 55% of Swedish embassy staff reported having received gender equality training and/or training on FFP. 45% of staff reported having received no gender equality or FFP training at all. Whether this is high or low depends on the point of comparison. In light of the fact that the FFP was to permeate the work of all foreign policy actors, it is remarkable that 45% had no such training at all.

3. Did the FFP lead Swedish agencies and embassies to pursue gender equality differently? If so, what new methods were used?

Mostly no: although we could not systematically classify and assess the methods used over time, our qualified conclusion is that the FFP did not entail new methods per se.

- As a collective, agencies and embassies rely on all four of our broad categories of methods to pursue FFP goals: they provide funding, training, facts and information, and normative argumentation (norm promotion) to support gender equality. However, some agencies and embassy sections rely more on some of these methods than others.

- Aid embassy staff reported norm promotion to be the most common method used to pursue gender equality.
 - It was not possible to systematically classify and assess in what ways the methods used by agencies and embassies might have changed after 2014. Annual reports and operational plans differed too much in form, changed too much over time, and were not concrete enough for a systematic comparison of gender-related activities across agencies/embassies and time.
 - Our qualified overall conclusion is nonetheless that the FFP did not primarily entail new methods per se. That said, the application of existing gender equality methods to trade required innovation. The FFP also entailed new ways to draw attention to and frame gender equality, namely through use of “feminist” and “the three Rs”.²
- 4. In what ways, if any, did implementation differ between the three policy areas (foreign and security policy, development; and trade and promotion)? Did the FFP perhaps entail joint action and coordination between these policy areas?**

Implementation of the FFP was not even across the three policy areas. The FFP contributed to joint action and coordination between policy areas.

- Agencies and embassy sections devoted to development engaged in more gender equality work before the FFP was launched than agencies and embassy sections devoted to trade & promotion or security. Development staff engaged in even more gender equality work after the FFP was launched. Other policy areas never “caught up” with development.

² “The three Rs” was a concept used by the Swedish government to describe its focus on equal rights, representation and resources between men and women.

- Agencies and embassy sections devoted to trade & promotion engaged in very little gender equality work before the FFP. In this respect, this policy area saw most change after the launch of the FFP, as trade & promotion actors started working with gender equality goals more systematically for the first time.
- Changes in security policy are mixed. Much of what one might consider to be security policy is carried out by the Ministry of Defence and thus not subject to the FFP. The ISP answers to the MFA and straddles security and trade. We found no evidence of any change in the direction of any gender equality work whatsoever within the ISP. On the other hand, the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) – an agency straddling security and development – saw significant increases in its gender-related work after 2014.
- As a new umbrella term for all the foreign policy areas, the “feminist” term came to serve as a push to integrate Swedish aid, trade, and security policy. This was evident at some Swedish embassies. How much of a push is beyond the scope of this report to ascertain.

5. Based on the analyses conducted to answer the questions above, what insights might we glean about the impact of using the feminist *label* on foreign policy?

The FFP label was used to put old wine in new bottles – “feminism” was used as a new way to present what had hitherto been referred to as “gender equality”.

- Feminist terminology never became predominant in the Swedish foreign service and foreign policy agencies. In particular, development agencies and embassy development sections continued working with “gender equality” rather than “feminist” terminology.

- Our embassy survey shows that “feminism” was used by roughly 25% and “the three Rs” was used by around 50% of aid embassy staff that worked with norm promotion. Whether this is a large or small share is difficult to assess. Given that “feminism” is a controversial concept in many contexts, 25% can be seen as a lot. If the expectation is that all Swedish embassy staff in developing countries should have used “feminism”, the share is low.
- Feminist terminology seems to have been more frequently used by the political leadership and ambassadors than by other parts of the foreign service and foreign policy agencies.

The FFP was never *merely* a label, however. Words matter, and the shift to FFP language served at least four additional functions in Swedish foreign policy.

1. The FFP label powerfully signaled the government’s greater ambitions and aspirations for re-starting the work with gender equality in foreign policy.
2. The FFP label helped strengthen Swedish international leadership on gender equality.
3. The FFP label heightened tensions with gender-conservative forces.
4. The FFP label helped conceptually unify trade, aid, and security policy under one umbrella term.

The report ends with some **concluding reflections** on two additional overarching themes central to the implementation of the FFP: the steering of the FFP, and its lasting value now that it has been retracted. On steering, we note that the implementation of the FFP was fundamentally shaped by its loose vertical steering. The FFP was a broad “approach” whose contents were to be specified by the implementing actors themselves. This resulted in great implementation diversity in the complex Swedish foreign policy machinery. We also note the existence of multiple steering directives,

on gender equality and on other goals: from the perspective of implementing actors, the sheer mass of goals, directives and steering signals is often overwhelming and difficult to navigate. We believe the implementation of the FFP had been enhanced if the government had provided a bit more tailor-made guidance for each specific agencies and embassy.

On the lasting value of the FFP, it is important to keep in mind that a range of national and international laws and regulations continue to place gender equality demands on the contents of Swedish foreign policy. This does not change simply with the retraction of the FFP as such. But we believe there may be some lasting effects of the eight years of Swedish FFP. For one, some of the learning, increased attentiveness to gender and sense of investment in gender issues among Swedish foreign policy actors is bound to last, at least for some time. In the multilateral realm, Swedish FFP efforts contributed to the establishment of gender equality clauses in international agreements and other international commitments. These remain in place and continue to place demands on Swedish foreign policy, even if the FFP has been retracted. Finally, roughly a dozen other states have followed the Swedish initiative and declared FFPs of their own, including Canada, France, Germany, and Mexico. An FFP+ Group was created in 2022, and there is civil society mobilization for FFPs in different parts of the world. In short, the international momentum around FFP no longer hinges on Sweden's foreign policy.

A more detailed summary of the findings can be found in the report's appendix, published online: <https://eba.se/en/reports/>

1 Introduction: the bilateral implementation of FFP

When it was declared by the left-green coalition government and its Foreign Minister Margot Wallström in the fall of 2014, the Swedish feminist foreign policy (FFP) was the first expressly feminist foreign policy in the world. The new policy generated a great deal of interest and debate, within Sweden and abroad, and it inspired other governments to follow suit. Around ten other states, ranging from major to minor international players and spanning different parts of the globe, have since also declared a feminist foreign policy or a commitment to developing such a policy.³ Civil society actors have started mobilizing around FFPs in different parts of the world, and a new organization specifically devoted to the global promotion of FFPs has emerged.

Despite having set such developments in motion, Sweden then became the first country in the world to retract its FFP. In the fall of 2022, the same day a newly elected liberal-right coalition government took office, the new Foreign Minister Tobias Billström announced that the FFP would end, eight years after its launch. He explained that,

The use of the label feminist foreign policy has obscured the contents of our policy. This is why the government will discard its use. But we will always support gender equality. (Tobias Billström, as quoted in [SVT.se](https://www.svt.se), 2022, our translation)

³ The following states have declared some form of FFP or a commitment to developing some form of FFP: Sweden (2014, retracted 2022), Canada (2017), France (2018), Mexico (2020), Spain (2021), Libya (2021), Luxembourg (2021), Germany (2021), Chile (2022) and the Netherlands (2022).

The introduction of the term “feminism” to describe foreign policy was undoubtedly a controversial move in 2014. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) was taken by surprise and initially unsure how to respond. The use of the term also stirred up political debate within Sweden, even though Swedish governments from left to right had supported gender equality and/or women’s rights for decades in one way or another. The rightist Christian Democrats and Moderate Party expressed opposition to the use of the feminist term (Diakonia, 2022). The populist radical right was particularly incensed, as the new term signaled a policy direction antithetical to its goals. Internationally, feminist terminology – much like gender terminology – also continues to be controversial, and the FFP was declared in response to a global context of more organized and vocal opposition to gender equality and women’s rights.

In addition to introducing the “F-word” at the highest level of foreign policy, the FFP was groundbreaking in Swedish foreign policy in at least two respects. For one, it was directed to all foreign policy areas of the foreign ministry (i.e. foreign and security policy; international development cooperation; and trade and promotion policy). Whereas Swedish development policy had incorporated gender equality aims for decades, the FFP staked out a new direction for other areas of Swedish foreign policy. Second, the FFP was to involve the entire foreign service and more, including not just the foreign ministry but also the public agencies executing foreign policy and the more than 100 embassies and delegations that represent Sweden in bilateral and multilateral fora around the world.

A point of departure for this report is that policy is never self-executing. Original policy declarations and documents need to be implemented, i.e. interpreted and put into concrete practice. Foreign policy leaders rely on civil servants in bureaucratic agencies and embassies to concretize and make something (or not) of policy aims. As Alden and Aran (2017:32) have highlighted, these implementing agents are often “distant from the policy makers in spatial, emotional

and often a geographic sense”. Such distance and complexity make foreign policy implementation difficult to grasp and overview, for policy makers and academics alike.

In addition to the general complexity of the foreign policy apparatus, with its large number of implementing actors, Swedish foreign policy implementation is also shaped by the relative autonomy of Swedish public agencies and embassies in determining *how* to implement foreign policy directives. As formally autonomous public agencies, they are given general directives by the government but are free to concretely apply these directives as they see fit. This means that the FFP could take many different directions and many different forms in practice.

The overarching question at the center of this report is: given the incredibly complex Swedish foreign policy machinery, with well over one hundred relatively autonomous implementing actors in Sweden and around the world, what happened to the FFP in practice? Were lofty declarations and feminist terminology converted into practical action? If so, in what policy areas and in what ways? The report was procured by the Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA) to address how the FFP was implemented in bilateral relations, by government agencies and embassies that conduct foreign policy in countries where Sweden engages in development cooperation.

1.1 The aims of the report

The report will address the following questions, with a focus – as requested by EBA – on bilateral relations with countries where Sweden conducts development cooperation:

- What FFP directives did the Swedish government give foreign policy agencies and embassies?
- Did agencies and embassies do *more* to promote gender equality after the FFP was declared than previously? If so, in what ways?

- Did the FFP lead Swedish agencies and embassies to pursue gender equality differently? If so, what new methods were used?
- In what ways, if any, did implementation differ between the three policy areas (foreign and security policy, development; and trade and promotion)? Did the FFP entail joint action and coordination between these policy areas?
- Based on the analyses conducted to answer the questions above, what insights might we glean about the impact of using the feminist *label* on foreign policy?

To address these questions, the study follows the bilateral implementation chain from the Swedish MFA to the Sweden-based government agencies and to Swedish embassies and consulates general around the world.

The primary target audience for this study include those who implement foreign policy at the Swedish MFA, Sweden-based government agencies, and Swedish missions abroad. The study is also expected to be of interest to equivalent actors abroad, and especially those who pursue FFP or gender equality goals in foreign policy. Those interested in the implementation of policy formulations into foreign policy practice might also find value in the report. University students may also find the report helpful, to better understand the Swedish foreign policy implementation process.

1.2 Scope and delimitations

The pursuit and implementation of the FFP raises a range of compelling questions worthy of investigation. Our study is by necessity limited in scope, however, in at least eight ways.

First, since the focus is on *implementation* of policy, the study does not question the goals of the FFP as such. For instance, this study does not examine whether the FFP goals are “truly” or adequately

feminist, or whether Sweden should pursue an FFP at all. This study concerns how, where and to what extent feminist policy – *as defined in policy by the Swedish government* – was implemented.

Second and relatedly, the focus of the report is *not* on *the effects of the FFP on gender equality* in the societies where Sweden conducts development cooperation. With an implementation focus, the study centers on effects among implementing actors, i.e. how government policy was *put into practice* by various Swedish foreign policy actors in the implementation chain – the MFA, Sweden-based public agencies, and embassies. This is worth keeping in mind when reading the report.

Third, the study focuses on implementation in *bilateral* relations. The important work in multilateral and regional fora is thus beyond the scope of this report.

Fourth, the study focuses primarily on bilateral implementation in countries where Sweden engages in *development cooperation*. That said, the report does not restrict its analysis of Sweden-based agencies to those that are exclusively devoted to development (such as Sida and Swedfund). Instead, all relevant agencies are included, as the agencies direct themselves to foreign policy towards all countries, including those with which Sweden has a development relation.

Fifth, the study focuses on bilateral implementation by Swedish *state actors*. Collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs) was crucial, and the government relied in part on CSOs to pursue FFP goals. How CSOs implemented the FFP is beyond the scope of this report, however.

Sixth, the study focuses on the FFP as a domain of the *MFA* and its *three main policy areas*: foreign and security policy; development cooperation; and trade and promotion. The focus on the three main policy areas was stipulated by EBA. How the FFP was implemented in bilateral work on consular issues is thus beyond the scope of this report. Since the FFP was formally under the auspices of the MFA and the foreign minister, its formal reach was limited to policy

conducted by the MFA. Migration and police matters are thus beyond the scope of this report. For similar reasons, since Swedish defence policy and the Ministry of Defence were also not subject to the FFP, they are not included in this report. The Women, peace and security (WPS) agenda is thus discussed to the extent that it involves the MFA and its agencies, but the many other Swedish security sector actors involved in the implementation of the WPS agenda are not subject to this report. In other words, not all Swedish gender equality work with foreign policy bearing is included in this report. The focus is on the formal domain of the FFP (i.e. policy conducted and implemented by the MFA and its agencies and embassies) and its three main policy areas.

Seventh, the study focuses on *foreign policy operations and activities*. This means that we largely leave aside the many internal organizational and staff changes that the declaration of the FFP may have entailed for the Swedish foreign service. The creation of an ambassador for gender equality and FFP; FFP or gender units or Gender Focal Points; the hierarchical placement, staffing and budget of these units; training of staff and other staffing and organizational policies are clearly absolutely crucial for how FFP is implemented. However, while we do touch on some organizational factors, this is largely beyond the scope of this report. So is the internal politics of implementation – the report does not address how civil servants may maneuver to support or defy FFP goals and directives.

Eighth, and finally, the aim of the report is to provide a comprehensive “big picture” narrative about the bilateral implementation of the FFP across a large number of public agencies and embassies and across time. In order to create this large-scale analysis, we delved deep into the concrete practices of agencies and embassies through a close reading of close to 400 of their documents (roughly 15,000 pages) and through 26 longer interviews with their staff. However, the report cannot provide details of the FFP work of each agency or embassy. Nor could it find other sources and measures for the big picture than these actors’ own documents and self-reporting.

This, too, is worth keeping in mind when reading the report: the sweeping comprehensive analysis is produced through many hundreds of hours of deep engagements with what individual agencies and embassies report that they do.

2 The feminist foreign policy in brief

The Swedish FFP was by design very broadly formulated, conceived of as an “approach” rather than a set of specific and concrete directives. As we show in the remainder of the report, this had effects on its implementation.

The FFP was declared in October 2014, during the first media interview with the newly appointed Foreign Minister Margot Wallström (Larsson, 2014). It quickly became clear that the FFP was not to become a policy with very specified contents. Instead, as Wallström explained, “it was about changing the outlook [...], an approach” (Interview 1_MFA). As such, the FFP had clear parallels with gender mainstreaming, i.e. the thorough integration of a gender perspective in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of policy in order to promote equality between women and men.

In many ways, the FFP was a continuation of existing Swedish gender equality work in foreign policy. By declaring a feminist foreign policy, Foreign Minister Wallström states that she intended to shake things up, to provoke reflection among Swedish foreign policy actors about how to do more to advance gender equality (Interview 1_MFA). The FFP was a clear but general signal that *all* MFA-related actors should prioritize work with gender equality (Interview 6_Sida; Interview 4_MFA; Interview 8_FBA; Interview 10_Swedfund). It was up to implementing actors to fill the FFP with contents and to concretize the policy contextually. In the words of Ann Bernes, the second Ambassador for gender equality and coordinator of the FFP (2015–2021), the FFP “can take very different expressions since it is always to be based in the contextual reality where it is pursued” (as quoted in Wallin, 2016).

In early 2015, in the spirit of prompting each embassy to dig where it stood and look for opportunities in its specific context, the MFA requested that each embassy put together a report on how it had already worked with gender equality before 2014, with reflections on how to develop that work ahead.

Wallström and the MFA soon gave the FFP a bit more direction. The overarching goal of the FFP was to promote what Wallström coined as “the three Rs”: equal Rights, equal Representation and equal Resources between men and women (MFA, 2016a). The FFP was also broken down into six more specific objectives.⁴ The understanding of the FFP as a broad tent remained, however. Indeed, during the eight years that the FFP was in place, there were no substantive shifts in the contents of the policy. As Bernes explained in 2021:

There has been no change in the approach over the years. If you look at our action plan, which comes out annually, you can see that the long-term goals, as well as the chapters on actors, tools, and approach remain the same. (Bernes, as quoted in Yar 2021)

Nevertheless, and even though it was clear that the FFP involved the entire MFA, in 2019, the new label feminist *trade* policy was added to the FFP as a way to add focus on the trade area.

The FFP was retracted in October 2022, after a shift in government, as described in the introduction to this report.

⁴ The Handbooks for Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy (e.g. MFA, 2018d; MFA, 2019) lists six external objectives aiming to guarantee all women and girls’ 1. Full enjoyment of human rights, 2. Freedom from physical, psychological and sexual violence, 3. Participation in preventing and resolving conflicts, and post-conflict peacebuilding, 4. Political participation and influence in all areas of society, 5. Economic rights and empowerment, 6. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Sometimes a seventh internal objective is added 7. Swedish Foreign Service internal activities support and advance the policy (MFA, 2017a).

2.1 Previous studies of FFP

There has been a veritable explosion of academic studies on FFP in the past decade, focused on the contents of policy in declarations, speeches and documents produced by the government (e.g. Egnell, 2016; Aggestam & Bergman Rosamond, 2016, 2018, 2019; Aggestam, et al., 2019; Bergman Rosamond, 2020; Thomson, 2020; Robinson, 2021; Nylund, et al., 2022; Zhukova, et al., 2022). What the term “feminist” means in the Swedish FFP, what “feminist” *should* mean in FFP, the transformative potential of the Swedish FFP and whether it should be understood as an ethical alternative to *realpolitik* have been questions of particular interest to these scholars. A few studies have in turn centered on the reception and perception of the Swedish FFP by various foreign actors (e.g. Rosén Sundström & Engström, 2020; Rosén Sundström et al., 2021; Rosén Sundström 2022a, 2022b; Zhukova, 2023).

Very little prior academic scholarship has examined the implementation of the FFP. The few existing implementation studies have focused on one aspect of foreign policy – public diplomacy – and they have zoomed in on the public diplomacy activities either of the Swedish Institute or of one or two Swedish embassies (Jeziarska and Towns 2018; Mitchell, 2021a; Goedecke & Klinth, 2021; Jeziarska and Towns 2021; Jeziarska 2022; Karlsson 2022). These studies suggest that SI and the embassies struggle with the “feminist” terminology, making it equivalent to “gender equality” and avoiding mention of the FFP in contexts where opposition to gender equality is strong. Our report will broaden the focus, including much more than public diplomacy, examining nine agencies and forty embassies, and focusing on more than how the feminist terminology is used. In doing so, we provide a much more comprehensive and systematic analysis of the implementation of the FFP. As the analysis below will show, agencies and embassies *do* struggle with the feminist terminology at times, but they have also embraced it and used it, even in headwind contexts.

3 Central analytical concepts

3.1 Feminism and gender equality

The concepts “feminism” and “gender equality” are central to this report. Like all concepts, feminism and gender equality are both contested, and there are multiple and conflicting views of what feminism and gender equality (should) mean.

Since this is an implementation study, we define feminism and gender equality inductively: we use the terms the same way that the Swedish government and the implementing actors do (see chapter 2 for the government’s focus on equal rights, representation and resources between men and women). Both terms are thus used as concepts-in-use, rather than as analytical concepts whose theoretical meanings are discussed and specified prior to the analysis. As we will show throughout this report, the government used feminism as synonymous with gender equality.

For efficiency, we use the terms “gender” and “gender-related” to refer to goals and activities that the government, agencies, and embassies describe in terms of gender, sex, intersex, women, girls, men, boys, non-binary and trans people, male, female, masculinities and femininities (and their equivalences in Swedish and Spanish). The term “LGBTI+” is used to refer to minority sexual orientations and gender identities.

3.2 Four basic foreign policy methods

To assess whether agencies and embassies did more to promote gender equality, and/or whether they pursued gender equality goals differently after the FFP was launched, the report needs a simple classification of methods of foreign policy implementation. Such a classification would also help capture potential differences in

implementation of the FFP between policy areas. In the many documents issued by the Swedish MFA and its agencies, there is a plethora of “methods” associated with the FFP, e.g. the FFP Handbook, Sida’s Gender Toolbox, the 45 Toolkits of the Swedish Institute. These practitioner guidelines, however, are far from systematic in their use of gender-related “methods”, “tools” and “techniques”. There was thus no readily available definition and classification of methods available in the practitioner material.

We thus turned to international relations scholarship to develop a classification of methods. We aimed for a classification that would be abstract enough to use across all three policy areas and simultaneously concrete enough and close enough to what practitioners use and recognize.

We use a simple definition of “methods” as *systematic procedures and techniques used to attain a goal*. When it comes to foreign policy-specific methods, states have a broad repertoire at their disposal: they may provide (1) funding, (2) training and capacity-building, (3) facts and information, and/or (4) argumentation and dialogue in order to bring about gender change abroad.

(1) Funding. Much scholarship has shown that policy offering some form of economic incentives to the target actor is more likely to be effective in bringing about gender change than policy without any economic incentives (e.g. Donno, et al., 2022; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Krook, 2009). Whenever foreign policy involves a donor-recipient relationship, donors have a number of aid-specific tools at their disposal, such as gender conditionality, gender budgeting, policy dialogue on gender, and more. Not surprisingly, all else equal, target actors are simply more likely to change their behavior when offered funding. We can thus assume that if Swedish foreign policy actors have devoted more money to gender equality, this would have more effects than not doing so. However, much gender equality change has been promoted by foreign policy actors with few if any economic incentives to offer. They rely on three less costly methods.

(2) Training and capacity-building. A second broad method of promoting gender change abroad consists of providing training and building the capacity of actors so that they have the skills and knowledge required to pursue gender change. Offering courses, workshops, seminars, and talks is indeed a common way for foreign policy actors to shape outcomes abroad. The potential themes of gender-related training are many and varied, including e.g. how to gender mainstream an organization, new masculinities, how to gather gender disaggregated statistics, how to promote women in leadership positions, how to persuade others that gender equality is valuable, how to make the voting process safe for the LGBTQI+ community, and much, much more.

(3) Facts and information. Putting together and disseminating facts and information about gender-related matters is a third broad method of promoting gender change abroad. Foreign policy actors commission, assemble and circulate fact sheets, scientific reports and other informational materials in order to increase knowledge about and attention to a range of gender-related issues. Again, the potential themes of such fact sheets and reports are almost endless, including e.g. statistics on gender gaps in education, earnings, household labor, land ownership, and more; prevalence, costs and effects of domestic violence; the number of men and women in leadership positions; what the law says about sexism and gender discrimination; parental leave rules; and much, much more.

(4) Normative arguments and political dialogue. Fourth, foreign policy actors may use various forms of argumentation and dialogue in order to try to achieve gender change abroad. Argumentation and dialogue may of course include promises of funding (or threats of removing funding) or training, and it usually includes facts and information about gender. However, we see argumentation as an analytically distinctive category of methods to pursue gender goals. For one, foreign policy actors often try to persuade others without funding being on the table. In addition, while facts and information are a necessary part of argumentation, we see the use of arguments

and political dialogue as something *more* than simply providing facts and information. Facts and information need to be framed and put into a narrative about why a policy alternative or certain kind of behavioral change is preferable to other options.

In order to be persuasive, foreign policy actors thus have to rely on *framing* techniques, i.e. present facts in a way that effectively points to a certain kind of problem in need of certain kinds of solutions. For instance, gender equality issues can be framed in terms of economic growth, universal human rights, cultural tradition, and more (e.g., Verloo, 2007). As much research has shown, how an issue is framed is often more important than the sheer facts of the matter (e.g. Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). This is well known among diplomats, who are well attuned to the need to adapt their message to context in order to be more persuasive.

With our simple classification of four broad sets of methods, we aimed to systematically examine whether the introduction of the FFP entailed more or different funding practices, training and capacity-building, dissemination of facts and information, and/or argumentation and dialogue techniques by the various foreign policy implementors. Our expectation was that while the FFP may not have entailed any new funding (thus not *more* of this method), it may have brought about different ways of using funding. We also expected that the FFP may have entailed not just more but also new kinds of training and capacity-building in gender equality/feminism, more and different ways to disseminate facts and information about gender equality/feminism, and more and different ways to promote gender change through argumentation and dialogue.

3.3 Implementation

The concept of implementation is also at the core of this report. In Pressman and Wildavsky's (1984:xv) classic formulation, implementation concerns the "interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieve them". But goals are

continuously set by various foreign policy actors, and goals may be refined and adapted when engaged in actions. What, then, counts as “implementation”?

We use implementation the same way as it is formally understood in Swedish public administration. Formally, policy is set by the government – politically elected officials and their political staff. Policy is subsequently implemented by civil servants in the public administration, e.g. by the foreign policy agencies and embassies. Our distinction between policy (goals) and implementation (practice) thus hinges primarily on the actors. The government sets the policy and overarching goals, and civil servants of the agencies and embassies implement them by interpreting, concretizing, and putting them into practice. As one Sida interviewee commented, “yes, it’s been made clear to us by the MFA that they set the policy and we implement it. We may not call what we do ‘policy’ or ‘policy development’” (Interview 6_Sida).

4 The bilateral implementation chain: FFP from the Swedish Government Office to embassies

By what actors and through what steering relations was the FFP to be implemented? This chapter provides a schematic overview of the foreign policy implementation chain to help the reader understand the central question of how policy moves and develops from the Swedish government to the agencies and embassies.

4.1 The Swedish foreign service – an overview

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is at the core of the Swedish Foreign Service. Together with roughly 138 foreign missions (91 embassies placed abroad, 30 embassies (ambassadors) placed in Stockholm, 9 consulates general, and 8 multilateral missions), it makes up the Swedish Foreign Service. There are also 330 honorary consulates.

The internal organization of the MFA is complex (see Murray, 2011; MFA, 2022a). Its organization is divided between the political leadership (elected officials and their state secretaries) and civil servants. The political leadership and much of the rest of the MFA are organized in terms of the three main policy areas: foreign and security policy; trade and promotion; and development cooperation. Under the social democratic government and the FFP (2014–2022), each policy area was headed by a minister and a state secretary.⁵ The foreign minister is also head of the MFA as a whole, which hosts the minister(s) of trade and development.

⁵ The new government (2022–), which has retracted the FFP, has combined trade and development under one minister with two state secretaries.

Embassies. The Swedish foreign service also consists of its embassies. While governed by the MFA, each embassy is simultaneously an autonomous public agency. As such, they are entitled to implement government policy independently and without direct political involvement in their operational activities. Embassies are typically also organized in terms of the three main foreign policy areas. Career diplomats from the MFA are core staff at the embassies. However, embassies often host staff from other Swedish ministries and government agencies as well. Staff from Sida are part of aid embassies and central to their development sections.

Foreign policy agencies. In addition to the Swedish foreign service, around ten public agencies are governed by the MFA. As public agencies, they are also autonomous organizations, tasked with implementing foreign policy in various ways. By and large, they can be classified in terms of the three main policy areas: foreign and security policy (ISP – the Inspectorate of Strategic Products); trade and promotion (SI – the Swedish Institute, Business Sweden, EKN – The Swedish Export Credit Agency, National Board of Trade Sweden, Swedac – Swedish Board for Accreditation and Conformity Assessment); and development cooperation (FBA – the Folke Bernadotte Academy, Sida – the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Swedfund).

Other implementing actors. In addition to the agencies and foreign missions within the Swedish Foreign Service and those tied to the MFA, Swedish foreign policy is often implemented in partnership with other government ministries and not the least with international organizations (e.g. within the United Nations (UN) system) and CSOs in Sweden and abroad. As stated in the introduction of this report, the implementation by these actors – as well as multilateral implementation – is beyond the scope of this report.

4.2 The implementation chain

Foreign policy formulation and implementation takes place via a web of these actors, through a long and complex chain that is difficult to survey and grasp. Indeed, in the process of writing this report, we were struck by the fact that many of our interviewees seemed to have difficulties relating to or understanding the Swedish foreign policy apparatus as a whole. It is also telling that the 2018 government memo “Formal Steering Related to the Feminist Foreign Policy” (our translation) does not actually provide an account of how the FFP is steered. Instead, as the memo states in its introduction, it “provides *examples* of this steering” (MFA, 2018a:1, emphasis added).

Policy formulation. The government formulates foreign policy. Foreign policy goals are first formulated in general terms in the text and budget posts of the annual budget bill, that is subsequently voted on in Parliament. General principles and directions of Swedish foreign policy are set out in a foreign policy declaration in February each year. The government then specifies policy priorities and goals in steering documents that steer the MFA, the foreign policy agencies, and foreign missions.

Policy implementation. To implement policy and steering documents, the foreign policy agencies and embassies create their own annual operational plans that concretize, develop, and operationalize the directives from the government. For the agencies, operational plans are typically elaborate documents that set out concrete goals and tasks intended to reach those goals. Embassies, in turn, develop much briefer annual operational plans, typically consisting of a few pages (or a few Excel sheets) listing various concrete activities planned for the year. The operational plans are developed in dialogue with the MFA.

The implementation process is made even more complex by the fact that foreign policy agencies such as Sida, FBA and Business Sweden may give assignments to or place personnel at embassies. So may other Swedish ministries and policy agencies.

5 Research design: agencies and embassies

To provide a comprehensive analysis of where and how the FFP has been implemented in the Swedish foreign policy apparatus, the study relies on a mixed research design including two complementary studies focusing on different implementing actors: (1) foreign policy agencies and (2) the Swedish foreign missions.⁶

As a starting point of the implementation chain, we use the official formulation and directives on the FFP as defined by the MFA. To better understand the steering of the agencies and embassies, we also interviewed five high-level political officials in the MFA and the ambassadors for gender equality and feminist foreign policy.⁷

The foreign policy agencies and embassies were selected as the focus of the study because of their crucial role in the bilateral implementation of Swedish foreign policy. They are tasked with implementing policy formulated by the Swedish government, but they are also expected to adapt and concretize policy. Agencies and embassies can thus be seen as nodes for bilateral FFP implementation as their staff interpret the policy and translate it into concrete activities and working methods.

Our analyses include nine public agencies governed by the MFA: Business Sweden, the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), the National Board of Trade Sweden (*Kommerskollegium*), the Swedish Export Credit Agency (*Exportkreditnämnden*), the Inspectorate of Strategic Products (ISP), the Swedish International Development

⁶ Includes embassies and consulates general, henceforth referred to as embassies, unless a distinction is necessary.

⁷ See list of interviewees in Appendix, section 1.1.

Cooperation Agency (Sida), the National Accreditation Body for Sweden (Swedac), the Swedish Institute (SI), and Swedfund.⁸ These implementing agencies vary greatly in size and budget.

There are around 100 Swedish foreign missions, including 91 embassies and 9 consulates general placed abroad, as well as 30 Stockholm-based embassies.⁹ Due to the bilateral focus of the study, we have excluded foreign missions that represent Sweden in multilateral contexts (such as the Swedish UN representation in New York, or the Swedish EU-representation in Brussels).

In line with EBA's mission, the focus of the report is on the implementation of the FFP in the 40 countries in which Sweden engages in development cooperation.¹⁰ However, foreign and security policy and trade and promotion policy may be directed towards all countries, including development partners. All nine agencies are thus considered relevant for our analysis. In order to understand what, if anything, is distinctive about how aid embassies implement the FFP, we distinguish between embassies located in the 40 countries with which Sweden has development relations and embassies located elsewhere. For efficiency, we refer to Swedish embassies in countries with which Sweden has development relations as "aid embassies". We also selected two large aid embassies for closer scrutiny: the embassy in Bogotá, Colombia and in Nairobi, Kenya. The analyses of these two aid embassies mainly serve the purpose of providing detailed

⁸ The MFA lists ten public agencies that they govern on their website. We exclude two of these, as we consider them to be of lesser significance for our purposes: the Sweden House in St Petersburg and the Nordic Africa Institute, a research institute in Uppsala. We also add one agency: Swedfund. Swedfund is the Development Finance Institution of the Swedish state and it is formally placed under the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation. However, the MFA is responsible for substantive issues related to its activities and it coauthors its steering documents.

⁹ See complete list: <https://www.swedenabroad.se/sv/utlandsmyndigheter/>

¹⁰ See list in Appendix, section 3.2.

illustrations of embassy implementation of the FFP in quite different development contexts. We describe the embassies and the rationale for their selection further below.

Our analyses of the implementing agencies and embassies rely primarily on self-assessments of various kinds – in documentation produced by the organizations themselves as well as self-reported survey data and interview material. While this means that we may expect some bias towards reporting successful implementation, we have taken care to not only study documents and individuals who are primarily responsible for gender or the FFP. Our focus was on documents and respondents central to the core activities of the agencies and embassies. For instance, we thus distributed our embassy survey to all diplomats and other staff responsible for implementing foreign policy of any kind. In the case of agency and embassy interviews, more than half of respondents do *not* have a specific responsibility for gender issues or for the implementation of the FFP.

5.1 Foreign policy agencies

The study of the nine foreign policy agencies mainly relies on two distinctive sources of data. First, we collected a large body of *documents*, such as appropriation directions and owner directives (124), operational plans (83), annual reports (146) and other relevant reports and texts (20), dating from 2008 to 2022. In total, there were 371 documents comprising 15,288 pages.¹¹ The documents enable an examination of changes in goals and activities over time, as well as an assessment of differences in goals and activities between the three policy areas. We coded their contents in terms of whether it contained reference to the FFP and/or gender-related themes in depictions of (a) goals; (b) budgets; and (c) activities. We then coded the FFP and/or gender-related goals, budget posts and activities in terms of the

¹¹ The list of agency documents can be found in Appendix, section 2.1.

four methods (1) funding, (2) training and capacity-building, (3) facts and information, and/or (4) argumentation and dialogue and their target groups. The aim was to subsequently analyze each of the four methods even further, in order to be able to track changes after the FFP was introduced, across policy areas and in different embassy contexts. The coding was quite demanding, as the agencies' work on the FFP is not necessarily described coherently in separate sections nor with sufficient detail to determine what the work implies.¹²

Second, we conducted 1–3 *interviews* in each agency, 10 interviews in total, as a complement to the document analysis. These interviews were mainly conducted before the FFP was retracted. Interviewees were asked to describe current FFP activities and assess changes after the introduction of the FFP. Most interviews were carried out on Zoom, lasting 1–2 hours each, with at least two researchers present, and subsequently recorded and transcribed.¹³ Transcripts of the interviews were analyzed in the same way as the documents.

Once the data had been collected and coded, it was classified and compared. This study places two kinds of comparisons at its center: across time and between policy areas. The comparison over time pays particular attention to the year 2014 as a potential breaking point, as that was the year the FFP was launched. The comparison between policy areas relies on the distinction between three policy areas made by the MFA: foreign and security policy; trade and promotion; and development cooperation. For each agency, we developed 3–5 pages of analyses, condensing the information from all the documents and interviews about concretized goals, methods used, and target actors prioritized.

¹² The coding schema can be found in Appendix, section 2.2.

¹³ See list of interviews in Appendix, section 1.1.

5.2 Embassies

The embassy study combines a broad survey of all Swedish embassies with an in-depth study of two embassies, in Bogotá, Colombia, and Nairobi, Kenya. The focus is on the 40 countries in which Sweden engages in development, but the survey was distributed to *all* Swedish bilateral foreign missions¹⁴ to compare the so-called “aid embassies” and other foreign missions.

The survey ran from June 2, 2022 to July 17, 2022. For more information about the survey programme SurveyToGo see Appendix.¹⁵ We obtained GDPR compliant informed consent from all participants.¹⁶

The survey was distributed to 1,098 embassy staff,¹⁷ including both diplomats and local program employees involved in program activities,¹⁸ using a list provided by the MFA. The response rate was 50% (551 individuals), which is relatively high for an online elite survey. Diplomats were less likely to take the survey (a response rate of 44%) than locally employed staff (60%). Aid embassies had a higher response rate (54%) than other embassies (44%). This means that our results may be slightly skewed towards the views of local employees in aid embassies. This is, in itself, an interesting result that can be seen as an indicator of interest and engagement, as the invitation to the survey clearly stated that it was about the implementation of the FFP (for more detail, see Appendix, section 3.6).

¹⁴ See Appendix, section 3.1 for a list of Swedish bilateral foreign missions.

¹⁵ For information on survey programming, see Appendix, section 3.4.

¹⁶ This statement can be found in Appendix, section 3.5, and some more information about standard survey practices that were followed are described in Appendix, section 3.6.

¹⁷ Of 1,155 invitations sent, 1098 were valid requests for contacts. Some contacts were on leave for the entire period or had left their positions.

¹⁸ The local employees are both Swedish nationals and citizens of the country in question.

The survey collects views and experiences from implementors of the FFP at Swedish foreign missions. We thus get a unique view of the extent to which members of foreign missions had the required support to implement the FFP, whether they changed their working methods, and their perceptions of whether the FFP had an effect on gender equality on the ground. While survey questions are by necessity rather crude, the embassy survey gives us a useful global overview of the implementation of the FFP.

Two in-depth studies of the Swedish embassies in Bogotá and Nairobi were used to complement the embassy survey with illustrative detail from two quite distinctive “development” contexts. With its 71 employees, Nairobi is the largest Swedish foreign mission in the world. The Swedish embassy in Bogotá is also quite large, employing roughly 40 people. Both are so-called aid embassies, meaning that they have designated development sections alongside other sections, as well as members of staff deployed by Sida and (in the case of Bogotá) the FBA. However, whereas the Colombian context is fundamentally shaped by the protracted armed conflict and subsequent peace process, the Kenyan context is characterized much more extensively by poverty. These embassies thus provide illustrative insights from quite different development contexts.

We conducted our analysis of the two embassies in ways similar to the agency analysis described above. Documents collected included the Country Development Strategies 2008–2025, the Annual Strategy reports, and the Annual Embassy Operation Plans.¹⁹ We also conducted 5–6 interviews with embassy staff at each embassy. It just so happened that the FFP was dismantled after the embassy survey had been finished but before most of the embassy interviews had been carried out. This gave us some opportunity to also study the reactions (or lack thereof) to the removal of the FFP.

¹⁹ See Appendix, section 3.3. The archives of the MFA, Sida and the embassy itself could unfortunately not locate the Colombian embassy’s operational plans for 2008–2011, so our Colombia analysis starts with the OP of 2012.

6 FFP implementation by Sweden-based agencies

Earlier in this report, we highlighted that the FFP was conceived by the government in very broad terms. Swedish foreign policy was to pursue the 3 Rs (rights, representation and resources, sometimes also followed by a 4th R for “reality”), broken down into six or seven goals. However, what this meant concretely was a matter for each implementing actor to work out. That said, the government – through the MFA – had the option to steer implementation a bit more through the agency-specific steering documents that formally govern each agency (see chapter 5).

In this chapter, we examine the implementation of the FFP by the public agencies that answer to the MFA. What FFP directives, if any, did the Swedish government give these agencies? What did the agencies subsequently do with the directives? Did they do *more* to promote gender equality after the FFP was declared than before 2014? Did they do anything *new* and different? If we distinguish the agencies by the three policy areas, did implementation differ between them?

6.1 Introduction to the agencies

Each Swedish ministry, including the MFA, governs a number of public agencies and state corporations that are charged with applying laws and implementing government policy (henceforth, we refer to both agencies and corporations as “agencies”, unless a distinction is necessary). In other countries, it is not uncommon that such agencies are placed as units *within* the MFA (Murray, 2011:119). In Sweden, as noted earlier, these agencies instead have a great deal of formal independence and are quite free to shape *how* they implement government directives.

Box 1. MFA-governed public agencies and state corporations (by foreign policy area)

Foreign policy and security:

- **ISP – the Inspectorate of Strategic Products:** controls and oversees export of military equipment and products that may be used both for civilian and military purposes; handles targeted sanctions.

Trade and promotion:

- **SI – Swedish Institute:** promotes a positive image of Sweden abroad.
- **Business Sweden:** a public-private corporation that supports and promotes Swedish exports and investments in Sweden.
- **The Swedish Export Credit Agency (Exportkreditnämnden):** promotes Swedish exports and the internationalization of Swedish companies by insuring export companies and banks against the risk of non-payment in export transactions.
- **National Board of Trade Sweden (Kommerskollegium):** facilitates open and free trade by providing analyses, knowledge and support on trade rules and agreements.
- **Swedac – Swedish Board for Accreditation and Conformity Assessment:** serves as the national accreditation body, verifying compliance with quality and safety requirements and facilitating trade.

Development cooperation:

- **Sida – the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency:** implements Sweden’s development cooperation policy.
- **FBA – the Folke Bernadotte Academy:** a public agency for peace, security and development, deploys civilian personnel to peace operations and election observations; research, training and advice.
- **Swedfund:** a state-owned company that serves as the development finance institution of the Swedish state, using aid funds to make investments in developing countries to combat poverty. Answers to the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, but the MFA is responsible for substantive issues and coauthors its steering documents.

6.2 FFP in directives to the agencies, 2008–2022

Did the government’s instructions, appropriation directions and owner directives to the agencies on gender issues change after 2014?²⁰ The analysis of agency documents and interviews below shows that there is a clear change over time, with 2014 as a breaking point: the directives to the agencies clearly changed in the direction both of including more gender equality and explicit reference to the FFP. Starting with the instructions, whereas four agencies (Sida, FBA, National Board of Trade and EKN) had gender equality provisions included in their instructions before 2014, all but the ISP did after 2014.²¹ Few interviewees or annual reports made reference to the instructions when discussing gender, however. The more specific appropriation directions and owner directions changed even more markedly after 2014. As shown in Table 1 below, only 2 of the 9 agencies had gender-related goals and tasks specified in their appropriation directions prior to 2014, whereas 8 of 9 agencies did after 2014. What is more, as indicated in darker green in Table 1, the number of agencies with goals and tasks specified in terms of the FFP increased to 5 in 2020.

²⁰ The government’s most important steering documents for the agencies are “instructions” (*instruktioner*) and “appropriation directions” (*regleringsbrev*) or the equivalent “owner directives” (*ägardirektiv*) for public corporations. Instructions are ordinances in which the government defines the general goals and areas of responsibility of the agency, typically spanning several years. In contrast, appropriation directions and owner directives are typically annual, and they provide more specific goals and tasks as well as the budget and reporting requirements of the agency. The goals and tasks delineated in these documents are still sparse and general. Development agencies are provided a set of much more elaborate 5-year “strategies” (*strategier*) that set out much more specific directions, goals and tasks, with reporting requirements, than provided for the other policy areas. In 2022, there were 26 bilateral strategies, 6 regional strategies and 13 thematic strategies steering Swedish development cooperation.

²¹ Swedfund and Business Sweden do not receive such instructions.

Table 1. Gender/FFP in appropriation directions, annual guidelines* and owner directions**

		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020	2021
Security	Inspectorate of Strategic Products															
Trade & Promotion	Swedish Institute									√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Business Sweden*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A						√		√	√	√
	Swedish Export Credit Agency **										√	√	√	√	√	√
	National Board of Trade	√								√	√	√		√	√	√
	<u>Swedac</u>										√	√		√	√	√
Development	<u>Sida</u>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	<u>Folke Bernadotte Academy</u>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	<u>Swedfund</u>								√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Note: Business Sweden was founded in 2013. Light green boxes indicate presence of gender-related goals and tasks. Dark green boxes indicate presence of goals and tasks framed in terms of the FFP.

It is also clear that these annual government directives varied by policy area. The two main development agencies – Sida and FBA – were instructed to work with gender through the entire period, starting well before the FFP was launched. What is more, Sida and FBA, as well as the Swedish Institute, are the only agencies to receive any additional funding to speak of for gender equality activities after the launch of the FFP. In 2018, a new *Strategy for Sweden's development cooperation for global gender equality and women's and girls' rights* was approved, including funding. In size, the strategy is among the smallest of the thirteen thematic strategies. For the years 2018–2022, it encompassed a total of SEK 1,000 million (MFA, 2018b), and the following strategy for 2022–2026 encompassed SEK 1,300 million (MFA, 2022b). The additional funding was not explicitly tied to the FFP: the strategy itself does not mention the FFP, and Sida's and FBA's appropriation directions never expressly mention the FFP as such. However, some of our interviewees claim that the dynamics around the FFP contributed to the introduction of a global strategy on gender equality (Interview 6_Sida, Interview 7_Sida). So, was this extra funding FFP funding? Had the strategy and its funding come about without the FFP? The answer is not clear to us. What is clear is that the agencies were provided very little, if any, earmarked funding for their efforts to pursue FFP goals.

With the exception of Swedfund, the development agencies were already directed to work with gender equality when the FFP was launched. In contrast, the one MFA agency within foreign and security policy, the ISP, is the only agency that was not directed to work with gender goals or the FFP at all. Its instructions and appropriation directions are silent on gender goals throughout the period. If we turn to other official documents for clues, the government's annual written communication on strategic export controls did show some change: prior to 2015, these reports did not mention women, men, gender equality or feminism once. However, between 2015 and 2021, they included a brief section on “Export controls and feminist foreign policy”. The language in this section changes very little during the period, and rather than describe

concrete actions with respect to export controls and ISP activities, it primarily expresses the government's principled commitments to gender equality. One concrete activity concerning the ISP is mentioned in the communications: training of ISP staff so they have "sufficient expertise to be able to include gender equality aspects and risks of gender-based and sexual violence in assessments with regard to human rights and international humanitarian law" (Regeringens skrivelse, 2017:8–9).

In short, the government did not seem to have changed its directions to the ISP at all after the FFP was launched. In contrast, gender equality aims – without any reference to the FFP – were written into the directions of the two main development agencies Sida and FBA throughout the 2008–2020 period we study, with only minor changes. The FFP prompted the FBA to increase its gender-related activities anyhow, likely because of Margot Wallström's special interest in the WPS agenda. A 2018 government memorandum on the FFP states that the FBA "is put to use especially in questions related to the feminist foreign policy" (Memorandum 2018-06-28, p 2).

If there was more continuity than change on gender in the government's appropriation directions to the ISP, Sida and FBA, there was a clear change with respect to all the other agencies. Swedfund, a development agency, received instructions to work with gender for the first time in 2015. The most notable change over time concerns agencies dealing with trade and promotion. The government gave trade and promotion agencies annual gender goals and tasks for the first time after 2014. For most of them, starting in 2017/2018, directives were consistently made with explicit reference to the FFP.

Not surprising given the general character of appropriation directions, the government's calls to include gender and/or FFP in the activities of the MFA agencies were usually short and abstract. As an illustration, the guidelines (*riktlinjer*) to Business Sweden in 2018 read: "In its annual report for 2018, Business Sweden shall report on how it has contributed to the implementation of the government's feminist foreign policy within its field of activity

during the year” (MFA, 2018c:4). When FFP goals are expressly written into annual directives, even if in such abstract and concise terms, the intention of the government is clear: the FFP concerns these agencies and gender equality work should be integrated in their activities, be they export promotion or Sweden branding. In some cases, the formulations in the appropriation directions are more specific. For instance, the National Board of Trade was directed to “in consultation with the Government Offices, produce analyses and documentation in the field of trade policy” (MFA, 2016c:4).

6.3 What did the agencies do? Changes 2008–2022

So, what did the agencies do with the directives they were given by the government? This section turns to the implementation of the government directives by examining the activities of the agencies over time.

The analysis is based on the annual reports from the agencies (2008–2022), where they present a narrative about their activities during the year and their goal fulfilment, often directly referring to the goals from appropriation directions. In addition to annual reports, we also base the analysis in this section on the interviews with 1–3 representatives of each agency. We coded this material in terms of whether it contained reference to the FFP and/or gender-related themes in depictions of (a) goals; (b) budget; and (c) activities. We then tried to code FFP and/or gender-related goals, budget posts and activities in terms of our four methods (1) funding, (2) training and capacity-building, (3) facts and information, and/or (4) argumentation and dialogue (for a more detailed description of our methods of analysis and coding, see chapter 5 and Appendix, section 2.2).

Our intention was to use our coded data to assess both the potential increase in gender equality activities before and after the launching of the FFP and to compare between policy areas. We also use the

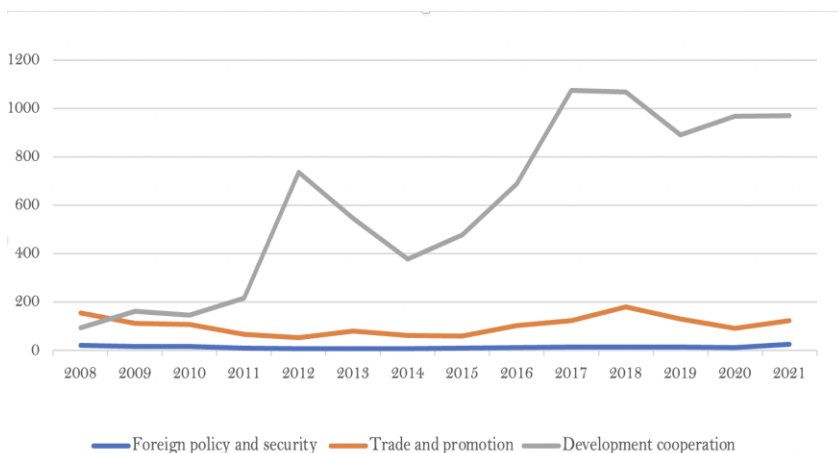
data to give examples of the trajectory in gender equality work in agencies from each policy area to illustrate shifts in how they engaged with gender equality over time. As we describe below, it turned out not to be possible to do a systematic analysis of the methods used across the agencies, policy areas and over time. The way the agencies describe and report what they do is just too abstract and diverse for this sort of comparison. We see this as an important finding in itself, a point to which we return below.

6.3.1 A first impression: a count of gender words in annual reports

To get a first sense of whether the agencies did more gender-related work after 2014, we compiled a simple count of the frequency of gender-related terms in the annual reports of all agencies combined over time (see Figure 1).²²

²² The visualization is based on a simple mechanical count of the frequency of the words wom*n, gender equality, femin*, gender, sex, LGBT*, man/men, male and masculin* (In Swedish: kvinn*, jämst*, femin*, gen/us/der, kön*, HBTQ/LGBT, män, manl*, mask*) that together capture various gender-related activities in all of the agencies' annual reports. Our total count does not consider whether the gender-related terms were used in reference to the internal personnel policy of the agencies or their foreign policy activities. However, we also checked the Human Resource sections manually, and only a very small share of use of these terms were in these sections.

Figure 1. Frequency of the total sum for gender-related words in the annual reports of Sweden’s MFA agencies (2008–2021), divided into policy areas



Note: Business Sweden is only included from 2013, when it was founded.

Figure 1 above shows two things. First, there is a marked increase in the discussion of gender-related work in the reports by development agencies after 2014. This is particularly interesting given that government directives to development cooperation agencies do not explicitly mention FFP, as discussed above.

Second, there are large differences in the extent to which agencies in different policy areas report gender-related activities. The development cooperation agencies clearly stand out, with most references to gender-related work. This may be partially explained by Sida and Swedfund producing longer annual reports than the other agencies.²³ However, clearly, this alone does not explain the tenfold difference we see in the graph. In contrast, the graph for the agency

²³ Except Sida and Swedfund, the total number of pages in each agency’s annual reports 2008–2022 vary between 900 and 1,100. Swedfund’s annual reports add up to 1,400+ pages, and Sida’s to 2,600+ pages. The length of their reports is probably related to the fact that they distribute large amounts of public funding and are thus expected to provide more thorough reports of their activities.

in the foreign and security policy area (ISP) is strikingly flat – around zero – indicating no reported gender-related activities either before or after the launching of the FFP.

When it comes to trade and promotion agencies, the diagram indicates an increase in reported gender-related activities starting in 2016, which can be traced back to these agencies having received directives to contribute to the FFP. The gender-related activities reported before 2014 concern the Swedish Institute’s campaign to promote the Swedish prostitution laws abroad. Between 2009 and 2013, SI used campaigns, workshops, and seminars to promote the original Swedish solution of criminalizing buyers rather than sellers of sex, combined with an effort to combat sex trafficking (Svenska institutet, 2009).

We have also traced the use of the word “feminism” to describe the agencies’ activities in their annual reports. In general, “femin*” is much less common than other gender-related words such as wom*n, gender equality, gender, man/men, male and masculin*, or LGBT* throughout the entire period of 2008–2021. In fact, femin* terminology is hardly used at all by the agencies. Such terminology appeared for the first time in 2015, and it was used most frequently in 2016 and then only 20 times by all the agencies combined. As a point of comparison, jämst* was used 277 times that same year.

6.3.2 Digging deeper: did agencies do more and/or something different with the FFP?

Did MFA agencies do more gender equality work and did they do anything different after the launching of the FFP? Unfortunately, the annual reports differ significantly in form from agency to agency and they have also changed over the years for individual agencies. What is more, the reports typically do not provide exhaustive lists of concrete activities – they often discuss *examples* of concrete activities to illustrate the kind of work the agencies carry out. FFP- or gender-related activities are furthermore not necessarily reported on in

separate sections, adding to our difficulties in distinguishing activities to be coded. Activities may also be discussed in more general or abstract rather than concrete terms. Combined, this made a systematic comparison of gender-related activities over time and across agencies virtually impossible.

That said, we can make a qualitative assessment based on our extensive reading of documents and also based on what our interviewees reported. In sum and in broad strokes, our assessment is in line with the mappings of government directives and annual reports: while the FFP made no difference to the work of the ISP, it introduced or intensified gender activities among the remaining agencies. The development agencies were already working extensively with gender equality, but they seemed to be doing more gender-related work than before 2014. Most of the trade and promotion agencies started their work with gender equality a few years after 2014.

We can also conclude that as a collective, the foreign policy agencies rely on all four broad foreign policy methods to reach FFP goals: they provide funding, training, facts and information, and normative argumentation to support gender equality. Individually, each agency tends to rely more on some methods than others, however.

For obvious reasons, the development agencies – Sida, FBA and Swedfund – provide more funding for gender equality than the other agencies (though FBA works more with training than with funding, as will be further described below.) To get some sense of whether gender-related development funding increased after the FFP was launched, we turned to OECD-DAC data on the allocation of bilateral aid to gender equality, comparing the period 2009–2014 with 2015–2021.²⁴ During the 2009–2014 period, 78% of Swedish bilateral aid was already devoted to activities that had gender equality as a “significant” or “principal” objective. This high share increased

²⁴ https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DV_DCD_GENDER

to 81% during 2015–2021. The share of activities with gender equality as a “principal” objective increased from 14% to 17% of Swedish bilateral aid.

The five agencies focused on trade and promotion have very diverse areas of specialization, and thus rely on different methods to promote gender equality. The trade agencies who work more directly with companies – through state insurances as in the case of The Swedish Export Credit Agency, through investment assistance as in the case of Business Sweden, or through accreditation of products as in the case of Swedac – only recently began engaging in gender equality issues, making it hard to establish which methods they use. Some of their work can be classified as norm promotion, as they seek to change various international regulations in ways that support gender equality.

The remaining two trade and promotion agencies – the Swedish Institute and the National Board of Trade – have a more overarching role in promoting Swedish trade and the image of Sweden. These two have had a deeper engagement with gender equality, relying mostly on the dissemination of facts and information about gender equality in trade and beyond. Additionally, both agencies use normative argumentation – the Swedish Institute as part of its public diplomacy activities and the National Board of Trade as part of policy advice to Swedish decision makers.

Also, we can conclude that Swedish foreign policy agencies engage in a large number of activities using a broad range of more specific methods to pursue FFP goals. Again, for the reasons stated above, we were not able to complete the kind of systematic analyses of differences and changes in specific methods that we initially set out to do. In order to nonetheless provide readers with some sense of the many activities and methods Swedish agencies engaged in to pursue FFP goals, we provide very schematic summaries by policy area. We couple the schematic summary with slightly longer summaries for one agency per policy area.

Foreign and Security Policy. The only agency falling into this category – the ISP – deals with export of military and dual-use equipment and products. As mentioned above, the ISP is almost entirely unaffected by, and exempted from, the FFP. In the ISP’s annual reports, there is no reference to gender equality, women’s rights, gender-based violence or the FFP during the entire period of 2008–2022. This is perhaps not surprising, given that the government’s appropriation directions make no mention of gender equality or the FFP. However, the UN Arms Trade Treaty of 2014 and the preparatory texts for the new Swedish law on strategic exports from 2018 which guide the ISP’s assessments of export credits explicitly include language on gender-based violence and women’s rights. Moreover, ISP staff received training in 2016 and 2017 to make assessments of export-related risks of gender-based violence. Since the ISP has not included any discussion of gender in its annual plans or annual reports, and since all our requests for interviews with ISP staff were turned down, we cannot establish whether the ISP has done anything at all – and if so, what, concretely – to align the agency’s work with the goals of the FFP. In a very brief email response, consisting of a few sentences, a representative let us know that the ISP sees and uses human rights criteria as a form of gender-based assessments (ISP e-mail exchange 2022).

Trade and promotion. In trade and promotion agencies, we observe the clearest change after the launching of the FFP. Apart from a very specific project on sex trafficking and prostitution laws by the Swedish Institute, gender equality was not prioritized by any of these agencies prior to the FFP. They started to include a focus on gender equality at different points and rates after 2014. The National Board of Trade received a directive to assist the government in developing a feminist trade policy in 2016 and was thus relatively early. Swedac “started to pursue the issue of gender equality in the accreditation world, a hitherto undeveloped area” only in 2019 (Swedac, 2019:3).

The National Board of Trade Sweden. This agency, one of the oldest in Sweden, is an expert organization facilitating open and free trade by providing knowledge and support to decision makers. As with all trade agencies under the MFA, we observe a distinct change in the government directives before and after 2014. An obligation to “integrate a gender equality perspective into its activities” was stated in government instructions already in 2009 (MFA, 2009b). However, the annual appropriation directions, which specify tasks more concretely, only mention gender equality once before the FFP: in 2008, the agency was compelled to report on its work towards gender mainstreaming (MFA, 2008). In response, the National Board of Trade started including a gender perspective in its expert analyses of trade (Kommerskollegium, 2010).

Starting in 2014, four new staff (of 90 employees in total) were recruited to work with sustainability and gender equality. Our interviewee at the National Board of Trade linked these recruitments to the 2030 Agenda rather than to the FFP, however (Interview 13_Kommerskollegium). In 2016, the agency was given a direct mandate to assist the government in developing the FFP in the trade area (MFA, 2016c). Since then, the National Board of Trade has relied on information gathering and knowledge dissemination as a method. It has developed comprehensive analyses of relations between trade and gender equality – both how gender (in)equality affects trade and how trade contributes to gender (in)equality. The agency has published three extensive reports on this topic (National Board of Trade, 2017, 2019, 2020). The National Board of Trade also uses training and capacity building to support gender equality, particularly with respect to its promotion of trade-related development (Interview 13_Kommerskollegium).

Initially, the National Board of Trade primarily framed gender equality as part of sustainable development and a matter for developing contexts. Recognizing this, its 2019 report *Trade and Gender Gaps. Can trade policy contribute to gender equal value chains?* deliberately expanded the focus on trade-gender connections beyond

the development context (Kommerskollegium 2019a; Interview 13_Kommerskollegium). Its annual report from 2019 also highlights this limited focus:

In recent years, there have been several trade policy initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment, often focusing on the situation in developing countries. The Swedish National Board of Trade's study on the link between trade and gender equality and the conditions for a gender-equal trade policy, 'Trade and gender equality – the role of trade policy,' focuses on the situation in high-income countries. (Kommerskollegium, 2019c:7)

Development. On the whole, among the development cooperation agencies, the FFP has not entailed any revolutionary changes in terms of the direction of their activities. The potential exception is Swedfund, which first received instructions to integrate gender equality in its activities in the owner's directives from 2015. In this sense, Swedfund follows the pattern for trade rather than aid agencies. Sida and FBA had already had clearly defined gender equality goals before 2014, and gender-related work was prioritized or integrated in their activities long before the FFP was launched (for Sida since 1996). Hence, the FFP was not a new direction for them.

That said, both FBA and Sida intensified their gender activities after 2015. Even though Sida is the larger agency, we have opted here to briefly describe the activities of FBA. Sida's gender-related activities have been described elsewhere, even if not in the context of the FFP (Mikkelsen et al., 2002; Byron & Örnemark, 2010; Bjarnegård & Uggla, 2018). Sida's activities will to some extent furthermore be analyzed in the next chapter on embassies, as it is primarily Sida employees who staff the development sections of Swedish embassies. What is more, Margot Wallström (foreign minister 2014–2019) has a background that aligns with FBA, having served as the UN Secretary General's first Special Representative on Sexual Violence in

Conflict (2010–2012). During her term as foreign minister, the FFP thus appeared to be particularly focused on gender and armed conflicts, sexualized violence in conflict, and the inclusion of women in peace negotiations. A 2018 government memorandum on the FFP states that FBA “is put to use especially in questions related to the feminist foreign policy” (MFA, 2018a:2).

FBA is a government agency for peace, security and development. In contrast to Sida’s focus on funding others, FBA is primarily involved in training others, offering courses and seminars to the security sector. Gender issues have been present in the appropriation directions for this agency during the entire 2008–2021 period, even though none of them mentions FFP as such. Contributing to the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) have been set out as one of FBA’s main tasks throughout. After 2014, the government clearly saw work with WPS as part of the feminist foreign policy. For instance, the foreword to the Swedish National Action Plan for WPS 2016–2020 starts with the sentence “Sweden’s feminist foreign policy has a clear focus on supporting women as actors for peace and security” (Government Offices of Sweden 2016:3). Starting in 2015, FBA was, like Sida, also included in the Gender Integration in State Agencies initiative (JiM – Jämställdhetsintegrering i myndigheter), urging FBA to align all of its activities with the government’s gender equality goals.

During the studied period, FBA’s WPS activities have expanded and been more fully integrated throughout the agency. Even before 2014, the agency was responsible for training and coaching on issues related to WPS, but a gender perspective has become progressively more integrated into all of FBA’s courses starting as early as 2010 (FBA, 2010). Apart from courses, starting in 2009, FBA had been mapping the training on and implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions on Women, peace and security in European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) operations which resulted in the launching of a “Gender Training Manual” for EU civil servants

in the ESDP in 2016 (FBA, 2016). Besides offering courses and training, FBA has also conducted research and disseminated some limited funding to CSOs and other actors working on WPS.

Without a doubt, the FFP has had effects for FBA. The FFP does not seem to have led to different kinds of activities than previously, but it did lead to FBA devoting considerably more time, resources, and efforts to WPS. First, in 2015 and 2016 and with direct reference to the FFP, FBA increased the number of staff to work with gender equality and WPS (FBA, 2015a:5 and FBA, 2016a:5). According to one of our interviewees, this was possible in large part due to the increased emphasis on the WPS agenda in the bilateral development strategies, which the interviewee in large part attributes to the FFP (Interview 8_FBA). Second, the 2015 establishment of a Gender Coach program tailored for select senior leadership within the Swedish MFA is likely a direct result of the FFP. The new MFA program was held in 2016, though apparently with some challenges due to the lack of time among MFA staff, personnel rotations within the MFA, and more (FBA, 2016b:30).

Third, in July of 2015, the government tasked the FBA with establishing a Swedish women mediation network, in the context of a 2-year project which also included collaborations with the Nordic Women Mediators network and networks of female mediators in the Global South (FBA, 2015b:31). The network was established in 2016 and came to consist of nine senior women in 2016 and 2017 (FBA, 2017:38), a number that had risen to 15 by 2022. These women mediators have subsequently been involved in e.g. EU, Swedish, OSCE and UN operations in countries such as Afghanistan, Mali, Georgia, Somalia, South Sudan, and Syria. FBA has provided material, advice, and support for the network. According to FBA, the Swedish women mediation network contributed to the creation of both the Arab Women Mediators Network and the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks in 2019 (FBA, 2019:31; FBA, 2020:34). According to our

interviewee, the network “would not have been created without the FFP, nor would it have received the support it did” (Interview 8_FBA).

Both interviewees from FBA, as well as Margot Wallström, attribute concrete consequences in the agency’s work to the FFP. As one of our FBA interviewees contends about the impact of the FFP:

[T]he fact that the FFP was declared and that the foreign minister took decisive action on these questions – not just symbolically but by prioritizing WPS in earnest – has had an *enormous* effect, not least for FBA. This really helped us grow... it is an important part of the reason that FBA employed 16 individuals devoted to WPS for a while. (Interview 9_FBA)

The other FBA interviewee makes a similar assessment, stating that “from my perspective, it is very obvious that it has become easier to work with these questions now. We have support to advance the position [of WPS], do more work” (Interview 8_FBA) and that the FFP has led to a surge in funding for WPS-activities. Supporting these claims, there are references in the annual plans and annual reports that suggest that the FFP did lead to more WPS-related activities, perhaps growing especially in 2015 and 2016. In 2015, work with WPS was identified as one of four central areas by the Director-General in FBA’s annual plan (FBA, 2015a:5). He stated that:

The foreign minister has launched the idea of a feminist foreign policy. The prioritization of the issue is clear from our appropriation direction, in which we are given more assignments on gender equality and 1325. We thus invest special efforts on this theme, increasing our personnel – among other things – in order to manage this central challenge. (FBA, 2015a:5)

6.4 Conclusions about the MFA agencies and the FFP

In sum, our analysis of **government directives** to MFA agencies shows that:

- Overall, there is a clear change in government directions after 2014: instructions to implement gender equality and/or FFP goals were included in all appropriation directions and owner directives during the period after 2014, with one exception: the ISP.
- With the exception of Swedfund, the development agencies – FBA and Sida – received directions to implement gender equality goals during the entire period. Swedfund received gender equality directions in 2015. The directions to the development agencies never included reference to the FFP.
- The most notable change in government directions concerns the trade-related agencies. Before 2014, none of them had been directed to work with gender. By 2018, all of them were instructed to work with gender equality, and all but one – Swedac – with explicit reference to the FFP.
- The government directives were brief and general, leaving much autonomy to the agencies to implement the goals and tasks as they saw fit.

In sum, our analysis shows the following about **activities and methods** of the MFA agencies:

- Overall, among the agencies, there is a clear change after 2014: all except the ISP included activities to promote gender equality or FFP goals after 2014, whereas only some did so before 2014. What is more, all of the agencies except the ISP engaged in more gender equality activities after 2014 than they did before.

- The level of change varied systematically by policy area. The activities of the trade agencies changed the most after 2014, in our assessment, as they had not worked much with gender equality at all previously (with the partial exception of SI). The development agencies increased their gender-related activities after 2014, but since they were already working extensively with gender issues, the change was not as notable. For FBA, an agency that bridges development and security, the FFP reinforced and expanded an already existing agenda. The expansion of FBA's gender-related activities after 2014 is notable.
- To what extent increases in gender-equality-related activities among the agencies after 2014 can be directly ascribed to the FFP is not always clear, because of parallel processes originating in Sweden and in the international arena (for instance the Gender Mainstreaming in State Agencies, WPS National Action Plans, the 2030 Agenda etc.).
- As a collective, the agencies rely on all four of our broad categories of methods to pursue FFP goals: they provide funding, training, facts and information, and normative argumentation to support gender equality. However, each agency relies more on some of these methods than others.
- The agencies engage in a lot of activities using a broad range of more specific methods to pursue FFP goals. The way these activities are described and reported on, in operational plans, annual reports and interviews, is too diverse across agencies and across time to be able to systematically compare and assess.
- The agencies have not systematically or consistently made use of the terms "feminism" or "feminist foreign policy" in their work (we develop this point in a chapter below).

7 FFP implementation by embassies

In this section, we turn to how Sweden's foreign missions, i.e. embassies and consulates general (hereafter embassies), have worked with implementing the feminist foreign policy. What difference did the FFP make for how embassy staff worked with gender equality? Did they place more emphasis on gender equality issues after 2014? If so, in what ways? And did this vary between so-called aid and non-aid embassies, on the one hand, and between aid and non-aid sections within embassies, on the other? To what extent and how did embassies rely on feminist terminology?

To address these questions, we make use of survey data and case study data, as accounted for in chapter 6 on our research design and in the appendix.²⁵ As a short recap, in order to get a comprehensive overview of the bilateral implementation of the FFP at Sweden's foreign missions in development partner countries, we designed a large survey that was sent to all Swedish embassies and consulates general around the world.²⁶ The survey represents the most complete description to date of the state of gender equality work in Swedish foreign missions. Sending the survey to all foreign missions allows us to examine what, if anything, is distinctive about aid embassies when compared to non-aid embassies.

We illustrate the survey results with examples of embassy work in Bogotá and Nairobi. While both belong to the category of aid embassies, Colombia and Kenya constitute quite different contexts for FFP implementation. The armed internal conflict between the government of Colombia and far-right paramilitary groups, on the one hand, and far-left guerrilla/terrorist groups such as the

²⁵ See Appendix, section 3.

²⁶ Again, as described in the design chapter, including deployed diplomats as well as locally employed staff members but excluding members of staff whose responsibility is primarily administration, service, or support.

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), on the other, has defined Colombia's economic, social, and political landscape for the past 60 years (1964–2016). Indeed, the conflict continues to shape Colombian society even after the historical 2016 peace accords between the government and FARC (Sida, 2022a). Hence, the overarching focus of the embassy in Bogotá has been on the conflict and peacebuilding process. As an upper-middle income country and OECD member since 2020, Colombia would not normally be a recipient of Swedish development cooperation, but the protracted conflict and its aftermath has led Sweden to continue cooperating with Colombia as a foreign aid donor.

Kenya, a lower middle-income country, is a more typical development cooperation context, with 80% of the Kenyan population living below or close to the poverty line (Sida, 2022b). The Swedish embassy in Nairobi is Sweden's largest embassy, with around 75 staff in 2022 (the staff of the embassy in Bogotá is around 40). Like the embassy in Bogotá, the embassy in Nairobi carries out the same kind of work that all embassies do – engaging in political dialogue, Swedish business promotion, and so on. However, compared to Colombia and non-aid embassies, the Nairobi embassy centers various efforts to reduce poverty in the Kenyan population, through work related to the environment, democracy, human rights, and economic development. Both embassies also represent Sweden in a few neighboring countries, and both have regional responsibilities, neither of which are included in this study.

The remainder of this chapter addresses how Swedish aid embassies implemented the FFP in their bilateral work. We make comparisons with non-aid embassies and use case illustrations from Colombia and Kenya to do so. For readability, we have organized the chapter in terms of the questions we address. We begin with an analysis of what the government directed the embassies to do. The next section then turns to the question of what kind of gender equality infrastructure that was put in place at the embassies. The subsequent section analyzes whether the embassies did more and/or anything different

after the FFP was introduced. Then, we describe the methods embassy staff used to pursue the FFP, in broad strokes. The chapter ends with a summary of our main claims about the bilateral implementation of the FFP by aid embassies.

7.1 What were the embassies instructed to do?

What did the government tell the embassies to do with respect to gender equality and the FFP? What, if anything, changed in these directives after the launch of the FFP? To answer these questions, we must first briefly discuss how the Swedish government steers the embassies. The steering of Swedish embassies is complex, consisting of a mix of “policy signals” from the government, the MFA operational plan, operational plans developed by the embassies and approved by the MFA, and directives from various Swedish government departments and agencies that have posted personnel at the embassies. At Swedish aid embassies, other than the MFA itself, the most important agency, by far, is Sida, with a large number of seconded staff. Indeed, relations between the MFA, Sida and the embassies are particularly complex. However, other foreign policy agencies, such as FBA and Business Sweden, may also place staff at embassies.²⁷ Embassies are thus staffed by a mix of career diplomats, seconded personnel from agencies, and locally recruited professional and administrative staff.

Swedish embassies, like much of the Swedish foreign policy apparatus as a whole, are loosely steered and diversely organized. Even though ambassadors are head of authority, their seconded staff is simultaneously under the authority of various other agencies. For simplicity, the complicated steering of aid embassies can be divided by policy area. Embassies’ development work (carried out by Sida

²⁷ Embassy staff placed by e.g. the Ministry of Defence, the Swedish Migration Agency or the Swedish Police Authority are beyond the purview of this report.

and FBA staff) is steered by “development strategies”, while their politics, security and trade and promotion activities have no equivalent formal steering documents. Instead, work within politics, security and trade is developed by the embassy while taking cues from Stockholm and the MFA operational plan.

The main steering document of Swedish embassies is the embassy’s operational plan. Swedish embassies write their own operational plans, which are then approved by a (typically geographical) MFA unit after a “dialogue” with the embassy. Sometimes, the MFA may make some minor adjustments or additions to the operational plan.

Since there are few written directives from the government, it is not possible to assess changes in formal directives to embassies across policy areas over time. However, there are written directives steering development activities, which allow us to examine whether and how the steering of development has changed over time. Importantly, these directives concern the development activities of the embassies and not the embassies’ work as a whole.

One set of steering documents are the “country strategies” that guide Sweden’s development cooperation work. These are strategies of the Swedish government, although Sida provides a lot of input into their formulation. An earlier analysis of these strategies by Bjarnegård and Uggla (2018) shows that strategies after 2015 emphasize gender equality and women’s rights more frequently than before, even though strategies prior to the introduction of the FFP also commonly mentioned gender aspects. It is difficult to determine whether this increase is due to the FFP, however, as the government also ran the previously mentioned parallel “gender integration in public agencies” (JiM). To be sure, the FFP is rarely mentioned in the country strategies. The analysis also notes that the formulations about gender are often identical across strategies, without any evident country contextualization (Bjarnegård & Uggla, 2018).

In 2018, the MFA issued its first thematic strategy on gender – the “Strategy for Sweden’s development cooperation for global gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights 2018–2022”. Even though it emerged after the FFP was launched in 2014, the strategy makes no mention of the FFP. It instead highlights existing gender-related work in development cooperation and aims for a concerted effort in this area: “Activities should supplement and seek synergies with efforts already under way for gender mainstreaming and activities for gender equality throughout Sweden’s development cooperation, but not replace an ongoing activity” (MFA, 2018b). Still, even though the FFP is not expressly mentioned, a government report summarizing three years of the FFP (MFA, 2017a) lists the preparation of this strategy as an example of FFP implementation.

In sum, in our assessment of the government’s directives to the embassies, the FFP made more attention to gender possible at the embassies. However, aligning their work with FFP goals was never a formal requirement that the government placed on the embassies. We return to the question of the implications of this loose steering of the embassies for the implementation of the FFP in chapter 9.

7.2 Was gender equality infrastructure in place at embassies by 2022?

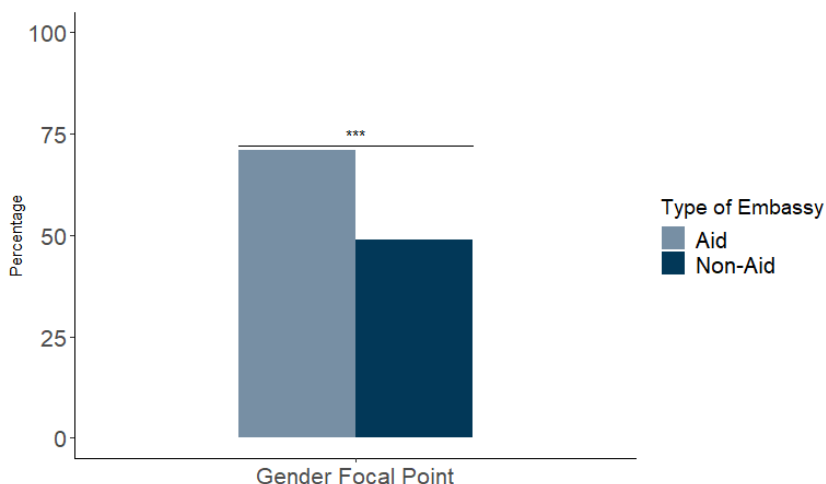
There are several prerequisites for FFP implementation that can be said to be part of a gender equality infrastructure. This includes the appointment of Gender Focal Points as well as FFP-related training. In this section, we begin by looking at the appointment of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and whether the appointment of GFPs varied by embassy type and section. We then turn to investigating whether embassy staff received FFP-related training, and how that training varied, and the reported effects of training on knowledge of the FFP.

7.2.1 Did embassies appoint Gender Focal Points? Did embassy staff notice?

As part of the FFP, each embassy was instructed to appoint a Gender Focal Point (GFP) to coordinate the work with gender equality in general and the FFP in particular (MFA, 2017a:4). Indeed, we were informed by the MFA that each embassy had a GFP in place and we obtained a list of all GFPs at the Swedish embassies from the MFA (though the list was a bit dated, for 2020). Results from our survey paint a different picture. Only 62% of all respondents reported that their embassy had a Gender Focal Point in place in 2022. In other words, as many as 38% of respondents reported that they either did not have a Gender Focal Point, or that they did not know if they had one. Even though we do not have data to confirm this, we think it is safe to assume that there were more GFPs in place in Swedish embassies after the launch of the FFP than there had been before.

There is furthermore an interesting and significant difference between aid embassies and others: Whereas 71% of all respondents working at aid embassies reported having a GFP, less than half of respondents in other foreign missions claimed to have one.

Figure 2. Embassy Staff Reporting Knowledge of a Gender Focal Point, in aid and non-aid embassies (%)

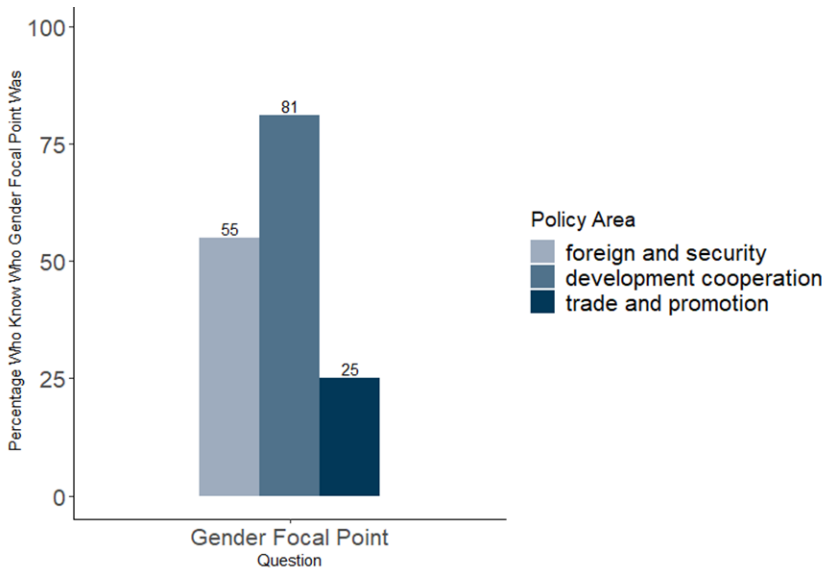


The numbers above demonstrate that GFPs were either not consistently appointed, or that their mandate was not strong enough for their colleagues to know about them. These numbers should also be interpreted in light of Swedish embassies not being very large workplaces – the largest embassy employs 75 staff.

Did staff responses vary by embassy section? Embassies are divided into different sections, typically corresponding to the main foreign policy areas: foreign and security policy; trade and promotion; development; migration; and consular issues. Even in so-called aid embassies in partner countries, only some of the staff are employed at the development section. This staff is typically posted by Sida.

Focusing only on aid embassies to compare between sections, we also see differences between the three main policy areas: foreign and security, development cooperation, and trade and promotion. In general, people working in development cooperation were much more likely to report that their embassy had a GFP in place (81% of respondents working with development cooperation, as opposed to 55% of those working in foreign and security, and only 25% of those working in trade and promotion).

Figure 3. Embassy Staff Reporting Knowledge of a Gender Focal Point, by policy area (aid embassies only) (%)



The relatively high numbers of aid embassies with Gender Focal Points, and the fact that their development sections were much more likely to report knowledge of a GFP, may be a function of parallel and overlapping gender equality mandates in Swedish foreign policy. It appears that the term “gender focal point” is not reserved for those appointed by the MFA as part of the FFP. The same term is also used for Sida-appointed gender network nodes based at aid embassies. This network had already been in place for several years when the FFP was launched (Interview 7_Sida). This may help explain why staff in development sections were much more likely to report knowledge of a GFP. However, this also raises questions about the relations between Sida’s and the MFA’s GFPs.

Our illustrating cases of Colombia and Kenya confirm this confusion and variation on the ground. In Bogotá, the embassy has an ambitious system. It has had a GFP for many years. Since 2019, there is a “gender advisory group” with four members, serving as advisors to the ambassador and the embassy as a whole. In addition, in 2022,

the embassy also started a process to have a GFP in each of its sections (Interview 17_Colombia). In Nairobi, there is just one Gender Focal Point. This GFP was appointed by Sida long before the launch of the FFP (Interview 23_Kenya). This has consequences, as it limits her mandate to coordinate gender equality work at other sections of the embassy. Interviewees from other sections of the Nairobi embassy were not even aware that there was a GFP at the embassy (Interview 21_Kenya). Neither of the embassies had received any additional resource allocation for the Gender Focal Points (Interview 20_Colombia, Interview 23_Kenya).

7.2.2 Were staff trained in FFP? Did training make a difference for knowledge?

FFP training is in itself a form of implementation of the FFP. But more importantly, training is an important precondition for the implementation of new policy. In the Swedish MFA, training in FFP was both preceded by and ran simultaneously as general training in gender equality. Among all our respondents, general gender equality training²⁸ was more common than specific FFP training.²⁹ Whereas half of our respondents claim that they have received gender equality training, less than a third say that this training specifically concerned the FFP. Most of those who received FFP training have also received gender equality training at some point. Notably, 45% of our respondents have received no gender equality or FFP training at all.

²⁸ Have you received gender equality training since you started working with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (or its related agencies/authorities, such as Sida, FBA, Swedish Institute, Business Sweden, Swedfund, Inspectorate of Strategic Products)? [Yes/No].

²⁹ Have you received specific training on the feminist foreign policy? [Yes/No].

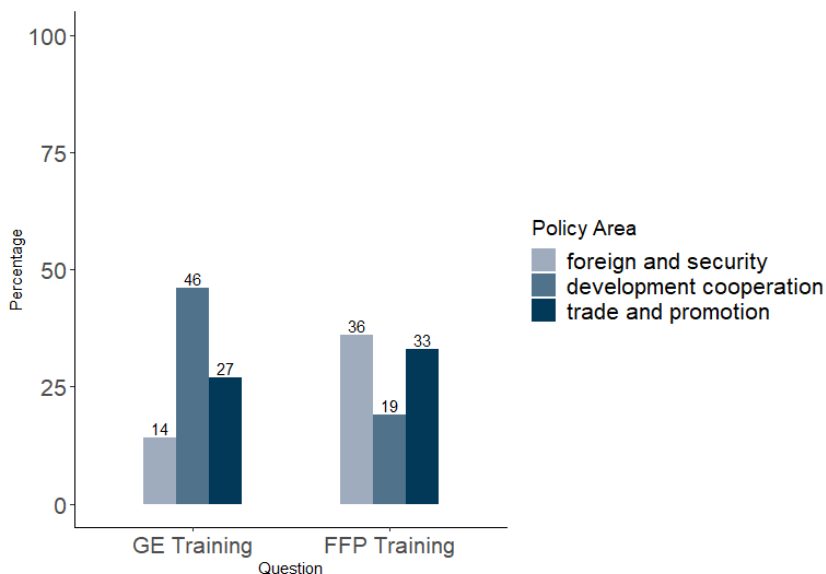
Figure 4. Gender equality and FFP training of staff in aid and non-aid embassies (%)



Respondents working in aid embassies were significantly more likely to have received gender equality training than their colleagues working in other types of embassies. Almost 60% of those working in aid embassies had received gender equality training whereas the number for those working in other foreign missions was 40%. For specific FFP-training, there were no significant differences between aid and non-aid embassies.

The association between gender equality training and development is confirmed when we zoom in on aid embassies to compare sections. Embassy staff working in development sections of aid embassies report gender equality training to a higher extent than people working in other sections. However, compared with embassy staff in development sections, embassy staff in foreign and security and trade and promotion sections report having received more additional and specific FFP-training. In other words, specific FFP-training seems to have been directed primarily to sections other than development.

Figure 5. Training by policy area in aid embassies (%)



Our illustrating embassy cases show similar results, highlighting that training following the launching of the FFP was mostly directed at staff in other sections than development cooperation. In the Bogotá embassy, for instance, there has been training on gender mainstreaming rather than on FFP. This general training, however, was related to the implementation of the FFP and was put in place to better ensure that people with their expertise in different policy areas could efficiently apply a gender perspective (Interview 17_Colombia). In 2017, the embassy in Nairobi also organized internal training on gender equality, as part of raising competence on gender within the framework of the FFP (Sveriges ambassad i Nairobi, 2017).

Our survey shows that respondents who have received training also report higher levels of knowledge of the FFP. In multivariate regressions, we could see that respondents who had gender equality and/or FFP training had a significantly higher estimate of their own knowledge about the FFP. FFP training had an independent effect, even when controlling for gender equality training and various other

indicators, such as gender, employment type and embassy section. In many ways, FFP training is also gender equality training, and FFP training should be seen as a largely overlapping subcategory of gender equality training. We do see that specific FFP training tended to increase the knowledge about the FFP also when controlling for more general gender equality training. These effects of training are visible among all embassies.³⁰

7.3 Did the FFP lead to more and/or different work at the embassies?

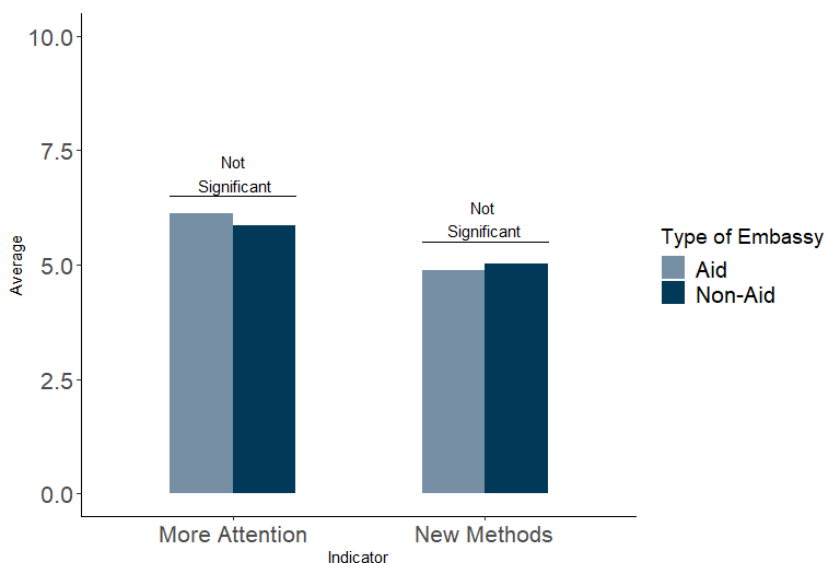
What does Swedish embassy staff say about whether the FFP resulted in more³¹ and/or new³² gender equality activities? People who had been working with foreign policy since before the launch of the FFP in 2014 are the only ones who can reliably assess whether they saw a change over time and as a result of the introduction of the FFP. In our survey sample, almost half of the embassy respondents (248 respondents or 47% of the sample) were working in foreign policy since before 2014. We thus base these particular analyses on these respondents only and exclude all respondents who started working in foreign policy after the FFP had been introduced. We start with the question of whether the FFP lead to more and/or new kinds of gender equality work, followed by a description of how these changes vary by embassy section (i.e. policy area), staff category and gender. The following section then describes how embassy staff pursued the FFP, in terms of our four broad sets of methods.

³⁰ See regression graphs in Appendix, Figure A3.

³¹ The introduction of feminist foreign policy has changed the way I work by requiring more attention to gender equality issues. [0–10 where 0 is “not at all”, 5 is “moderately”, and 10 is “completely”].

³² The introduction of feminist foreign policy has changed the way I work by introducing new working methods not previously used to reach gender equality goals. [0–10 where 0 is “not at all”, 5 is “moderately”, and 10 is “completely”].

Figure 6. Did embassy staff do more or use new methods to reach gender goals after the launch of the FFP in 2014?



Those who had worked in foreign policy since before the launch of the FFP contend that they could see discernible changes as a result of the FFP. Above all, they thought that the change entailed dedicating *more attention* to gender equality issues. The increase in attention to gender equality issues as a result of the FFP is assessed to be slightly above 6 on a scale from 0 to 10 (where 5 is ‘moderate,’ while 0 is ‘not at all’ and 10 is ‘completely’).

Respondents indicate that the FFP also brought about new working methods. The average estimate is just below 5 on a scale from 0 to 10 (where 5 is ‘moderate,’ while 0 indicates ‘not at all’ and 10 ‘completely’). The assessment by embassy staff is thus that the FFP moderately changed the way they work by introducing new methods, not previously used to reach gender equality goals.

There are no significant differences between aid embassies and other embassies on either measure. There are different ways to interpret this result. On the one hand, the FFP was intended to affect all staff in the entirety of the foreign service. The result supports this

expectation. However, assuming that aid embassies, with their larger development focus, were doing more gender-related work than other embassies prior to the FFP, it is also interesting to note that their staff report a similar level of change as a result of the FFP as staff in other embassies.

Taken together, these results imply that the FFP did have an impact, albeit moderate, in terms of giving more attention and providing new ways of working. While not revolutionizing prior foreign policy work with gender equality, it indicates that the FFP steered practical work and was more than a new label for practices that remained the same.

Our case studies of two embassies corroborate these results and contribute with some detail about what “more” and “different” might entail in two Swedish partner countries: Colombia and Kenya. An analysis of the operational plans of these two embassies shows that although they worked with gender issues prior to the FFP, both clearly focused more on gender issues after the launch of the FFP. The documents and interviews point to the use of “feminist” language and the “3 Rs”, as well as the introduction of gender equality analyses in trade activities, as the new kinds of activities that the FFP entailed.

The additional gender-related activities were expressly discussed in terms of the FFP in the Bogotá embassy’s operational plans, but less so in the Nairobi embassy’s plans. The Bogotá 2015 operational plan mentions the FFP already in the introduction: “in accordance with our feminist foreign policy, the embassy will place particular focus on women’s role as actors for a sustainable peace, in negotiations as well as in peace building” (Sveriges ambassad i Bogotá, 2015:1). There is a marked difference in attention to gender issues before and after the launch of the FFP in Kenya as well, with the operational plan from 2015 presenting the most elaborate description of the embassy’s gender equality work to date. The text seems to reflect ongoing internal deliberation about the FFP at the embassy, prompted by a 2015 MFA request to embassies around the world to report on what they were already doing with respect to gender

equality. The FFP is not explicitly mentioned as such in the Nairobi embassy's operational plans until 2017, however (Sveriges ambassad i Nairobi, 2017).

In Colombia, the FFP partly overlaps with the adoption of Sweden's third national action plan for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in 2016, for which Colombia was a prioritized country. This makes it difficult to distinguish the impact of the FFP versus the WPS. For instance, the embassy's Sida development strategy report from 2017 states that:

Gender equality and women as actors for peace have been a central part of [Sweden's] development cooperation since the first cooperation strategy [with Colombia] in 2003, [work that has been] amplified both through the Swedish feminist foreign policy and the action plan on Women, Peace and Security. (Sida, 2017)

This is also the view of most people interviewed at the Bogotá embassy: the FFP and the WPS both underpinned and strengthened the gender activities undertaken to support the peace process, but the FFP also sent a signal that this work could be expanded. One member of staff at the Bogotá embassy expressed it in this way:

The strategy allows us to keep a focus on 1325 – on women, peace and security – but the feminist foreign policy called us to go further, to do more and work more broadly on gender equality issues, on women's political participation and economic empowerment and so on. [...] In that sense, feminist foreign policy has meant that we have a broader focus on equality than just women, peace and security, which is what we would have if we had only had the strategy. (Interview 19_Colombia)

A more forceful effort to include gender equality in political dialogue after the launching of the FFP is also stressed in interviews with members of staff in the Nairobi embassy. Allegedly, the FFP gave the embassy staff the mandate to discuss what Sweden does in the area of gender equality more often and in a more comprehensive way, leading Kenyan actors to expect the embassy to bring up gender equality (Interview 21_Kenya, Interview 23_Kenya, Interview 25_Kenya). The interviewees highlight that with the FFP, the political section joined the development section in its commitment to gender equality:

At Sida [here referring to the development section at the embassy] we've always had gender as something you must take into perspective in whatever you're doing. So that has always been one of the aims of Sida. However, with the feminist foreign policy, I think it became a bigger issue. Because there is now the political section to cup that agenda. (Interview 23_Kenya)

In effect, the development section and the political section at the embassy in Nairobi reportedly started to work more conjointly to reach gender equality goals.

Averages may hide a lot of variation between respondents. To analyze this, we combined the answers on more attention and new methods into one index, *FFP practices*, measuring reported change in practical work as a result of the FFP. In a multivariate regression, we brought in several other variables to assess the extent to which they affected the respondents' practices when the FFP was introduced. The graphs illustrating the regression results, coupled with a brief discussion of the findings, can be found in Appendix, section 3.7. In short, local staff members and staff who had received specific FFP training were more likely to report having changed how they worked with gender equality as a result of the introduction of the FFP. Perhaps surprisingly, reported change does not significantly differ between men and women embassy staff (however, this says

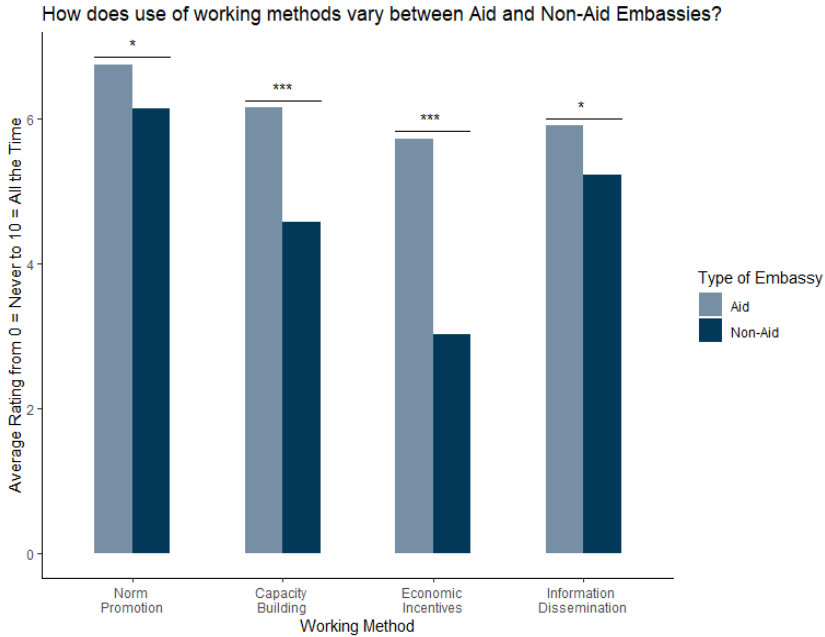
nothing about the general level of gender equality work of men and women staff – it only speaks to reported *change* as a result of the FFP). The section in which an embassy worker is based does not significantly affect their reported change.

7.4 What methods were used to pursue FFP at the embassies

In order to say something more about how the FFP was implemented, we categorized working methods for gender equality into our four overarching categories: norm promotion, capacity building, economic incentives, and information dissemination (see chapter 4). We asked respondents how often they used each of the working methods.³³ The scale goes from 0 to 10 where 0 means ‘never,’ 5 means ‘sometimes’ and 10 means ‘all the time.’

³³ Working methods for gender equality goals can be divided into four broad categories: 1. Norm promotion 2. Capacity building 3. Economic incentives and funding 4. Gathering and disseminating facts and information How often do you use each of these working methods to promote gender equality in {0}? [0–10, where 0 means “never”, 5 means “sometimes” and 10 means “all the time”.

Figure 7. Use of methods, by type of embassy



Note: The stars denote different levels of statistical significance, indicating how certain we can be that there actually is a difference. In this case, there is a statistically significant difference between aid embassies and other embassies in all four working methods. *** indicates significance at the highest level.

All four methods are used by embassy staff, and all methods are used more by staff working at aid embassies than other embassies. The differences between the type of embassies are the most pronounced in capacity building and economic incentives. Norm promotion stands out as the most common method for gender equality work in both aid embassies and other embassies.

In chapter 4, we described the method of norm promotion as entailing argumentation, dialogue and framing in order to try to achieve gender change abroad. What does the broad category of norm promotion in gender equality work actually entail, more concretely? In the below analyses, we focus on aid embassies only, as they are the focus of this report. In addition, we only include respondents who reported using the method relatively often (a 6 or above on a scale from 0 to 10).

We do so in order to get reliable answers of how the methods were implemented, from people who reported to be using them the most. While this snapshot description does not tell us whether the work came about as a result of the FFP, it does describe the methods used by staff at aid embassies when they use norm promotion to work with gender equality issues.

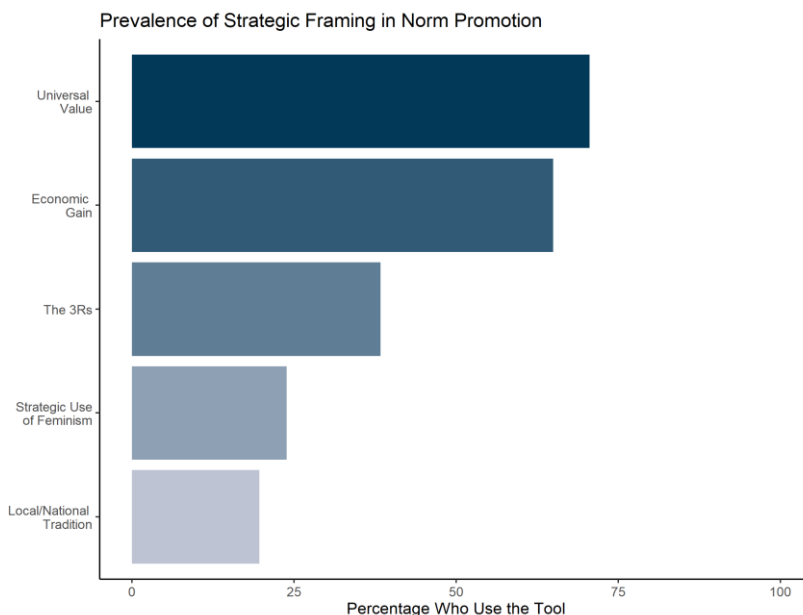
There are different ways of working with norm promotion.³⁴ Among these, strategic framing of gender equality was reported to be most common among aid embassies.³⁵ We had identified a number of possible frames a priori and presented the survey respondents with several options for how to frame gender equality: as a “universal value”, “economic gain”, as a “local/national tradition”, as “feminism” or in terms of “the three Rs”. The respondents claim that they used all our suggested frames. They used some frames more than others, however. Aid embassy respondents reportedly framed gender equality as a “universal value” and as an “economic gain” most frequently. As one interviewee at the embassy in Nairobi explains: “what we usually say in Kenya is that these are not Swedish priorities, these are universal standards where basically everything we think and say most countries have signed up to in various UN conventions” (Interview 25_Kenya). In political dialogues, Kenyan gender equality commitments, such as the Maputo Protocol (African Union, 2003) or the Constitution of the Republic of Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 2010), which provides a series of gender equality regulations, may be emphasized (Interview 23_Kenya, Interview 25_Kenya, also Sveriges ambassad i Nairobi, 2015).

³⁴ *Framing* concerns how gender equality is presented, as what kind of a problem. *Strategic messaging* includes being clear and consistent in how gender equality is promoted as well as adapting the message to the targeted actor. Norm promotion may also involve *expressing public support for certain actors* (e.g. women’s rights activists) and *promoting legal changes*.

³⁵ See Appendix, Figure A5 for a bar chart about the methods used for norm promotion.

It is reportedly much less common to strategically frame gender equality as a local or national “tradition”.

Figure 8. Use of different strategic frames by aid embassy staff



Two frames stem directly from the FFP: presenting gender equality in terms of “the three Rs” – rights, representation and resources – and in terms of “feminism”. These frames were utilized, but they were used less frequently than gender equality as a universal value or as a matter of economic gain. Less than half of the respondents who work with norm promotion in partner countries relied on “the three Rs”. Around 25% relied on the “feminism” frame.

Whether these rates are high or low depends on one’s point of comparison. Given the global dominance of narrating gender equality as a matter of universal values (or human rights) and as an economic gain, it would be very surprising if these were not the dominant frames in the Swedish foreign service. The fact that 25% of aid embassy staff who used norm promotion reportedly used the “feminism” frame in their work may be interpreted as low, if our

expectation is that all staff should have been incorporating this frame. However, 25% may also be considered high, given how controversial the term is in many parts of the world. Also, given that “feminist” terminology was not used very much either by Sida or the government’s steering documents on development, would we expect more than 25% of staff in aid embassies to use the “feminist” frame? Indeed, it is not given how to interpret the 25%. In the following chapter we turn to a more developed discussion of the feminist label.

In the survey, we also had a general question about how familiar the respondents were with the concept of “the three Rs”.³⁶ The average estimated familiarity among aid embassy staff was 6, on a scale from 0 to 10 (where 0 means no familiarity at all, 10 complete familiarity and 5 moderate familiarity). In other words, aid staff reported being slightly more than moderately familiar with the three Rs. This mean hides a broad distribution of answers, however: while 30% of all respondents reported being “very familiar” (equaling a ‘10’) with the concept of the three Rs, roughly 20% were “not at all familiar” with it (equaling a ‘0’).³⁷ Even for aid embassies, we find it remarkable that a fifth of the respondents had never heard of the concept, considering that the FFP has consistently been communicated through a focus on the three Rs.³⁸

The concept of the three Rs is mentioned much more often in our interviews with representatives of the MFA in Stockholm than by aid embassy staff. In some of our interviews with people working at the aid embassies, the lack of knowledge about the three Rs is

³⁶ I am familiar with the concept of “the three Rs”: [0–10 where 0 is “not at all”, 5 is “moderately” and 10 is “completely”]. While the 3Rs – Rights, Representation and Resources – were communicated internally to foreign missions early on, already in late 2014, a fourth R was sometimes added in later iterations: the Reality in which women and girls live and operate.

³⁷ A quarter of respondents responded in the range of 0 to 3.

³⁸ See Appendix, Figure A2 for the distribution of answers to this question.

touched upon in relation to the removal of the FFP in 2022. One embassy worker recounts her communication with members of the Sida gender network, saying:

And I'm like "yeah, you're complaining that the government is removing the feminist foreign policy, but I don't think any of you here can actually summarize what it's all about, or the four Rs". And that was very true. [...] The MFA has really worked with the feminist foreign policy, but Sida has stuck to gender equality, and we haven't used the same terminology. (Interview 23_Kenya)

7.5 A few partner perspectives on the FFP work of Swedish embassies

Swedish embassies implemented the FFP in part through "partnerships" with other actors in the countries in question. Embassy partners include a lot of different actors, such as international organizations; other embassies; Swedish state agencies, governments or state agencies of the country in question; civil society organizations, and more. We had hoped to survey the views of these partners in Colombia and Kenya, to get some additional insights on the implementation of the FFP by Swedish embassies. We were particularly interested in the perspective of local CSOs focused on gender issues. However, such a survey was not possible, as these embassies hardly have any local CSOs as direct partners.

Focusing on all 68 direct partners of the two embassies, the survey thus asked for feedback from UN agencies, Swedish government agencies, Swedish CSOs, Kenyan and Colombian government agencies and businesses, and a few local CSOs that are direct partners of the Swedish embassies in Bogotá and Nairobi. The

response rate was 37%, leaving us with 25 individual responses.³⁹ Most of the respondents reported working for partner organizations focused on democracy and human rights, and on conflict, peace and security. Virtually all of them reported working for organizations that place gender equality at the center of their activities and of their partnership with the Swedish embassy.

Crucially, this low number of respondents does not allow us to draw any general conclusions about what kinds of partners Swedish embassies have nor about how partners might view Swedish FFP work. We cannot determine how representative these answers are, so one does not learn anything significant from knowing how common certain views were among the 25 individuals. We thus do not report how many individuals responded one way or another. What we *can* do is describe a range of answers from these individuals, as an additional set of perspectives on the implementation of the FFP by Swedish embassies. We do so below.

The respondents consistently described Sweden as a reliable and active partner in the pursuit of gender equality. Some claimed that the Swedish embassies paid more attention to gender equality than other embassies, whereas other respondents stated that Sweden paid the same amount of attention to gender equality as others.

Previous foreign policy studies have shown that states that promote gender equality or women's rights often present themselves as experts on gender equality, eager to provide instruction to the rest of the world but hesitant to learn from others (e.g. Eriksson Baaz, 2005; Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012; Jezierska & Towns 2018; Keskinen et al., 2020; Nylund et al., 2022). This made us interested in whether Swedish embassies turned to partner organizations for advice and information about gender equality in Colombia and Kenya. Some respondents contended that the Swedish embassy did turn to their organization for advice on gender equality issues. In the words of one respondent,

³⁹ For more information on the partner survey, see Appendix, section 3.8.

The Swedish embassy has asked [my organization] about training on masculinities that challenge the patriarchal structure. In addition, the Swedish embassy has been interested in learning about proposals for specific measures to protect women involved in projects to build peace and defend human rights.

Others reported that the embassy had not sought their advice.

We also asked a set of questions specifically on the FFP. We wanted to know whether partners were aware that Sweden had an FFP (out of our 25 respondents, some knew while others did not). We also asked respondents whether they thought the feminist label was helpful to advance gender equality. Some did, others did not. When asked in what ways calling foreign policy “feminist” is helpful or unhelpful, we got a range of answers. We list some of these in Box 2.

Box 2. Partner voices on the feminist label on foreign policy

“Feminist” is a helpful label:

- “It catches people’s attention and curiosity about what it means”.
- “It sends a clear message of the importance given to the gender equality agenda”.
- “This label pronounces the political decision to support the women rights agenda”.
- “It puts emphasis on promoting women rights”.
- “It lifts the discussions to in-depth levels about sexual orientation”.
- “The feminist theory raises awareness about the unequal relationships of power that exist”.

- “The Colombian society (and Latin America) is under a lot of pressure from fundamentalist groups, representing a big threat towards women rights. It is a very patriarchal society with huge challenges for women. To have international support, politically and financially, in the struggle for a more equal society is very important”.

“Feminist” is not a helpful label:

- “Well, I believe it is good to use the word feminist when it comes to the Swedish government’s overall foreign policy. However, when working at local level, in bilateral cooperation, or when working with gender, I think that it is better to not use it”.
- “As an approach, it is extremely useful, however as a label, it only deepens resistance”.
- “I think the label is often met with stereotypes and resistance, I find ‘gender equality’ to be more inclusive”.
- “Because society and political leaders do not have a good understanding of what feminism means. To many people, ‘feminist’ has a negative meaning”.
- “There is less awareness on the meaning and to a large extent there is misinformation and disinformation regarding ‘feminist’ as being opposed to men. This creates resentment among men”.
- “In the local context, it can be misunderstood, especially among those who we have not enough time and opportunities for extensive awareness and sensitisation on what it means and how they can contribute to the course”.

Along similar lines, when asked what they thought might change now that the FFP has been retracted, the answers differed. Some argued that Swedish gender equality promotion would improve, without the allegedly antagonistic term. In the words of one respondent, “with the change, this is more accommodative to both male and female to positively engage on gender equality initiatives”. Another individual similarly contended that “this will have good outcomes on gender as a whole”.

Others argued that nothing would change – Sweden would continue as a gender equality promoter and leader, regardless of the label. In the words of one respondent,

Sweden has been a leader in advancing gender equality. I do not foresee a huge change in its approach. I think Sweden has established herself as a leader in inclusive and gender transformative leadership and the labeling or lack thereof, should not in my view negatively impact its work.

Another individual argued that “the ground has already been laid and allies created. So a change of name will not affect much in my view as long as they are committed to the fundamental principles of gender equality”.

Yet others were fearful that the removal of the label signified and signaled a lessened commitment to gender equality. One individual responded to the question by exclaiming “I hope nothing! Hopefully they will be able to keep showing how gender equality is central to their priorities”. Another contended that the retraction of the FFP “may give the impression that the emphasis on women is not as predominant as it was in the past”. Likewise, one responded stated that “this could be understood as a sign of deprioritizing the topic from Sweden. I fear it will lead to a loss of legitimacy on the topic and steps backward. I think it could affect the priorities of Swedish aid”.

7.6 Summary of findings on “aid embassies” and the FFP

In sum, our analysis of **government directives** to embassies in countries where Sweden conducts development cooperation shows that:

- Overall, there was a clear change in government directions after 2014: (a) steering signals to embassies were unequivocal and forceful: all embassies and all embassy sections were to pursue FFP goals in contextually appropriate ways; and (b) steering documents for development cooperation focused even more on gender equality, with a new so-called “global strategy” on gender equality and additional development funding for gender equality.
- While clear and forceful, steering signals simultaneously emphasized flexibility and context, and embassies were generally only given specified gender equality goals for their development work. How – and how much – gender equality was to be integrated in the work of political and trade sections was left open. Political and trade sections more or less determined their own goals or activities in their annual operation plans, guided by general steering signals from the government.
- Development agencies with staff in embassies (FBA and Sida) received directives to implement gender equality goals during the entire 2008–2022 period. Their directives never included explicit reference to the FFP. That said, again, the focus on gender equality in development increased after 2014 with the new global strategy and additional development funding for gender equality.

In sum, our analysis of the surveys and two in-depth cases shows the following about **activities and methods** of aid embassies:

Gender Focal Points and FFP Training in Aid Embassies

- Around 70% of respondents in aid embassies reported having a Gender Focal Point (GFP) in their embassy in 2022. This is significantly less than the MFA's goal of 100% but also significantly more than the roughly 50% that reported having a GFP in non-aid embassies.
- Development sections were much more likely to report that their embassy had a GFP in place (81% in development sections, compared with 55% in political sections and 25% in trade and promotion). Close to 60% of respondents in aid embassies had received gender equality training, and 25% had received training specifically on the FFP. Notably, 45% of our respondents had received no gender equality or FFP training at all.

Changes in gender equality activities after 2014

- Overall, embassy staff report a clear increase in activities devoted to gender equality after 2014. The reported level of change is similar among staff across policy areas and for men and women.
- How much and in what ways aid embassies implemented FFP goals varied considerably – some respondents reported much more change than others.

Methods used to pursue gender equality/FFP goals

- Aid embassy staff reported to rely on all four of our broad categories of methods to pursue FFP goals: they provided funding, training, facts and information, and normative argumentation to support gender equality abroad.
- Norm promotion is reportedly the most common method to pursue gender equality in aid embassies. Framing gender equality as a “universal value” and as a smart means to “economic gain” is most common (used by roughly 75% of staff who work with norm promotion).

- Aid embassies engage in a lot of gender-related activities. However, the way these activities are described and reported on is both too sparse and too diverse across embassies and across time to systematically compare and assess, even when focusing only on two aid embassies.
- The FFP provided aid embassies with new framing tools: the “3 Rs” and “feminism”. Framing gender equality in terms of the “3 Rs” was reportedly used by less than half of the aid embassy staff who work with norm promotion. 25% of aid embassy staff responded that they were not at all familiar with the 3 Rs. Framing gender equality in terms of “feminism”, as in the FFP, was used by around 25% of the aid embassy staff who work with norm promotion.

8 A feminist label on bilateral foreign policy: some reflections

So far, results in this report have shown that the Swedish Foreign Service and the foreign policy agencies did increase their bilateral work with gender equality after the declaration of the FFP and that this did take gender equality activities in new directions. A burning question that remains is, what work did the use of “feminism” as a term do? In what ways does it matter whether gender equality activities are referred to as “feminist foreign policy” or not?

There are at least two puzzling dimensions of the government’s use of the term feminism. First, when asked, the government has repeated that the feminism of the FFP is equivalent to “regular gender equality work”, and not least to gender mainstreaming. In the words of former state secretary for foreign affairs Annika Söder, the main question guiding FFP was, “are there gender-based inequalities that we can affect”? (Interview 3_MFA). If the contents is the same, then why a new term? Second, the government’s insistence that “feminism” is a broad approach rather than a strictly defined concept makes this question even more intriguing. If feminism is “an approach” that can include an enormous variety of goals and activities, then what work did this fuzzy concept do in foreign policy practice?

In this chapter, we offer some reflections on these questions about the functions of the term feminism. More specifically, we identify a set of recurring themes from our extensive reading of foreign policy documents, the embassy and partner surveys, the interviews with foreign policy practitioners, and existing reports and scholarship. A central premise for our reflections is that terms and concepts such as “feminism” have no inherent or given meaning – terms are ascribed meaning in social interactions, and their meaning and function change across time and context. With this as a point of departure, we discern at least five functions that the term feminism has had as a label for Swedish foreign policy since 2014.

8.1 A label to repackage gender equality activities

Many of our interviewees argued that “feminism” was used in part as a new label to describe existing activities. A number of agencies and all aid embassies were already pursuing gender equality goals when the FFP was declared, even if gender was not fully mainstreamed into all their activities. As a very open term, “feminism” did not necessarily demand a new direction for this work. For these actors, the FFP became a new way to package and present their gender-related work. Some of the interviewees describe working “backwards”, trying to think through which of their existing activities could be made to fit the feminist label.

The FFP label was clearly used more frequently by the political leadership at the MFA and by ambassadors in political dialogues than by the other parts of the foreign service and foreign policy agencies. Many foreign policy actors continued working with “gender equality” rather than “feminist” terminology. Apart from the brief nods to FFP in the annual reports of the MFA agencies, there is little reference to “feminism” to be found. For instance, in our embassy survey, the “feminist” frame was used by roughly 25% of embassy respondents who reported working frequently with norm promotion (roughly half of all our respondents). Indeed, the “feminist” frame was the least frequently used frame among our alternatives. As one Sida interviewee explained, “they mostly talked about feminism on the political level. With partners, we always use gender equality” (Interview 7_Sida). While it is possible to argue that use of the feminist frame by 25% of staff is significant, given the controversial nature of the terminology, it is nonetheless the case that most embassy staff reported not relying on feminist terminology.

Likewise, the “feminist” label never became predominant in Swedish nation branding activities. The Swedish Institute, the agency in charge of promoting Sweden and the Swedish brand, claims that “no, we haven’t actually used the word feminism but talked more

about rights. Her rights is popular...” (Interview 11_SI). Indeed, by 2018, two years after the SI had been instructed to integrate the FFP in their activities, SI’s nation branding efforts still rarely made use of the “feminist” term (Jeziarska & Towns, 2018). When it was used on the online nation-branding portal *sweden.se*, it was typically to assure the reader that “the word feminism is not as charged in Sweden as in many other countries” (ibid.:61). This once again suggests that foreign policy agents took the controversial nature of the “F-word” into consideration when implementing the FFP. The term was not even used much by the agencies that already worked most extensively with gender equality: the FBA and Sida. The established gender terminology among the development agencies was neither displaced nor complemented with the feminist terminology. Instead, this new and more radical concept landed with actors who had not worked as much with gender previously. Indeed, in some of Sweden’s embassies, the FFP and the feminist term were seen as an important profile question and as a Swedish brand.

In sum, the “feminist” term was clearly a label to rebrand already ongoing practice and to describe the new activities that developed after 2014. The term was used more by political leadership and ambassadors than by other parts of the foreign service and foreign policy agencies. That said, it would be a mistake to draw the conclusion that the “feminist” term was *merely* a label. Words matter, and the shift to feminist terminology served a number of additional functions in Swedish foreign policy.

8.2 Potent signaling of greater ambitions and a new beginning

A second recurring theme in our material is that the turn to the “feminist” label helped signal the new government’s greater ambitions with respect to gender equality, both domestically and internationally. Numerous interviewees and respondents claimed that “gender mainstreaming” – a concept which various Swedish

governments and state actors had been relying on for decades – had become a lifeless and bureaucratic term. The adoption of a new, controversial and combative concept by the political leadership helped stir the pot and reinvigorate a policy area that allegedly lacked momentum. The feminist label also signaled greater ambitions in the growing international polarization on gender issues.

Relatedly, the feminist foreign policy also signaled a new beginning for gender equality. With a new term, prior givens on gender equality work could more easily be challenged. Mostly, as this report has shown, the new direction consisted of applying previous goals and working methods to new areas, such as trade. Doing so was not easy, according to our respondents. What does a “feminist” trade policy look like, in concrete practice? What, precisely, do “feminist” standards for products and services in trade entail? What is a “feminist” tariff? The new term, applied to new policy areas, prodded agencies and embassies to think through these questions. Some of our interviewees still struggled with finding answers. For instance, the Swedish Export Credit Agency (EKN) had not yet developed an analysis of what “feminist” state export credit guarantees would look like, let alone gender equal such. During our interview, the EKN representative exclaimed, in exasperation, “it is difficult to define whether a paper mill is equal or not, if I may put it that way”.

Internationally, the new term sometimes opened the door for new discussions, with new actors. In particular, the fact that “very boring men in a suit and tie” (Interview 17_Colombia) declared that they are feminist seems to have stirred up both confusion and interest in the issue. Also, many actors, including in the armed forces and the police, have become aware of an increased international demand for the inclusion of women’s rights. This makes them keen on understanding what it is that they are expected to do.

8.3 Strengthened Swedish international leadership on gender equality issues

A third recurring theme in our material is that calling Swedish foreign policy “feminist” allegedly boosted Sweden’s role as a leader on gender issues internationally. The new label helped differentiate Sweden from other state advocates for gender equality, signaling – as we discussed above – that Sweden intended to do something new and different ahead. A number of interviewees claim that the new terminology piqued the interest of foreign counterparts, and that their curiosity and questions enabled Swedish foreign policy actors to raise gender equality issues. “[‘Feminism’] helped, because everybody asked ‘so, what’s that?’ – curiosity” (Interview 23_Kenya). Swedish actors appear to have raised gender issues in different ways: some stated that “feminism” was just a different word to describe what Sweden was already doing, others explained that the term indicated that Sweden would do much more of the same kind of gender equality work, and yet others emphasized the new directions Swedish gender activities were now to take. Regardless of the precise response, even if the response was simply to explain Swedish activities of the past, it seems clear that the introduction of the term brought about more conversations about gender equality and about Swedish initiatives on gender equality.

According to a number of interviewees, as a signal of heightened ambitions, the “feminist” term furthermore raised international expectations on Swedish actions for gender equality. As a representative of the National Board of Trade stated,

Sweden came to have an influential and trend-setting role [on promoting gender issues in trade]. Perhaps we had that role even before, but now there was something legitimate to which we could attach gender issues, so that we were the ones to be promoting these questions. (Interview 13_Kommerskollegium)

Our respondents claim that state actors abroad increasingly turned to Sweden for support or advice on gender equality policies, training, or other initiatives. In response, many Swedish foreign policy actors felt obligated to step up their game to meet these heightened expectations. We have heard the phrase *en feministisk utrikespolitik förpliktigar* (roughly “a feminist foreign policy carries obligations”) uttered many, many times through the course of preparing this report. Even though we have no numerical measures of how many Swedish foreign policy actors felt obligated to act due to the feminist label, and although we cannot conclude whether Swedish leadership actually increased given our research design, it is clear that a sizeable portion of the Swedish foreign service and foreign policy agencies express the view that the feminist label heightened international expectations and boosted Swedish leadership on gender issues.

8.4 Heightened tensions with gender-conservative forces

A fourth recurrent theme in our material is that use of the term “feminism” could serve as a barrier to dialogue on certain issues with gender-conservative forces. As a term with various and contextually variable connotations – with a progressive gender equality agenda; with man-hating; with a female equivalence to “machismo”, and more – feminism can be provocative and may stir up negative reactions (as does “gender” terminology in certain contexts). A number of interviewees raised this issue and discussed how Swedish foreign policy actors have opted to rely on or avoid the term, depending on context. As one Sida interviewee elaborated,

We discussed the new label “feminist” quite a bit. In what contexts does this work? Should we use this concept everywhere? Can it be destructive in some contexts? But we generally concluded that [the use of the “feminist” term] is a way for us to show that we really want some change. In dialogue, we can then explain what we mean. It wasn’t common that the use of “feminism” turned into something negative, but it could occasionally create difficulties... I know the Swedish embassy in Turkey struggled quite a bit with how to use the concept, for instance. (Interview 6_Sida)

The MFA also reflected on the potentially counter-productive effects of relying on “feminism”. As one person in a leadership position at the MFA stated,

It was clear from the beginning that the FFP is about dialogue... It is hard to engage in dialogue when one side is too much in your face. Reality check: if people close their ears when they hear the word “feminism”, then use concepts that work where you are. (Interview 4_MFA)

Embassy staff also recount that in some contexts, the word feminism has been criticized by domestic politicians who associate it with a disregard for the family and connect it to LGBTQI+ issues that are far more controversial (Interview 17_Colombia, Interview 20_Colombia). Yet in other contexts, the word may carry very little meaning and referring to policy as “feminist” thus does not create much of a reaction at all (Interview 24_Kenya).

8.5 A concept to integrate the separate tracks of Swedish foreign policy?

Gender issues are generally understood as cross-sectional, transgressing policy areas such as security, trade and development cooperation. Even so, prior to 2014, gender equality was strongly associated with Swedish development cooperation rather than the other foreign policy areas. The “feminist” label came to conceptually unify aid, trade, and security under one umbrella term. Even though “gender mainstreaming” or “gender equality” could have had similar integrative dynamics, the new term “feminism” came to have more integrative connotations than other terms.

Some of our interviewees argued that as a unifying umbrella term, the “feminist” label also had practical implications, helping to practically tie together trade, aid, and security policies that are typically organized and practiced as separate tracks. The feminist agenda gave foreign policy actors a mandate to speak about gender issues in all fora and contexts, at all levels of the foreign service and agencies. As the counsellor and head of development cooperation (*biståndsråd*) at the Swedish embassy in Bogotá contended,

we [the aid section of the embassy] have noticed a significant increase in the ambitions of the ambassador and the political dialogue... we [the embassy’s different sections] can work much closer together thanks to the feminist foreign policy. The aid section has definitely received more support from the political dialogue and there are more synergies. (Interview 16_Colombia)

Interviewees at the Swedish embassy in Nairobi made similar claims, contending that “the FFP legitimated raising gender equality issues in the private sector as well – it placed what had previously been ‘Swedish gender equality policy in aid’ in a broader context”

(Interview 25_Kenya). A Sida employee even claimed that “before [the FFP], ambassadors could be uninterested in gender equality” (Interview 7_Sida).

This is not to say that Swedish aid, trade, and security policy did not continue to operate largely as separate tracks. Nor is this to say that cross-sectional synergies and integration could not have developed with existing “gender mainstreaming” terminology. But it is clear that as a new umbrella term for all the foreign policy areas, the “feminist” term came to serve as a push in an integrative direction. How much of a push is beyond the scope of this report to ascertain.

9 Concluding reflections: steering an FFP and its lasting effects

This report delivers a first systematic assessment of the implementation of the Swedish FFP over time and across policy areas. Besides providing concrete answers about how the FFP was implemented, the findings also give rise to several questions and reflections that future studies could explore in more detail. In this section, we will reflect on the findings and raise additional questions on two overarching themes: the steering of the FFP and its lasting value now that it has been retracted.

Before doing so, let us start with a more general reflection: the FFP and its implementation seem to suffer from some conceptual confusion among Swedish foreign policy actors. Our interviewees and documents provided conflicting answers to such basic questions as, where does “foreign policy” begin and end in Swedish public administration? What policy areas and policy practices should be included in a feminist foreign policy? Which actors, specifically, are the implementors of this policy? Some of the confusion is due to the triple meaning of the term “foreign policy”: it seems to mean (a) all policy towards the abroad, by any ministry (b) all policy directed by the MFA, and/or (c) MFA policy that is neither aid nor trade. In other words, “foreign policy” is simultaneously used as a very expansive concept and as a very limited concept by Swedish foreign policy actors. Some of our interviewees within aid and trade explicitly stated that the FFP did not include them since it involved foreign policy. The fact that specific reference to the FFP was not written into Sida’s steering documents did not help clear up the confusion. Formulations by the MFA leadership, such as the statement in the 2016 FFP Handbook that “the work [with FFP] is done by implementing a systematic gender equality perspective *throughout* foreign policy” (MFA, 2016a:7, emphasis added) was thus not clear enough. This confusion about the fundamental meaning of foreign policy was an unnecessary obstacle to FFP implementation.

9.1 Steering and implementation

Assessments of the implementation of any foreign policy must start with policy steering. What, exactly, are implementing actors instructed to implement? How are they instructed to implement policy? Below, we argue that the implementation of the FFP was fundamentally shaped by (1) its loose vertical steering; (2) the existence of multiple steering directives, on gender equality and on other goals.

9.1.1 Loose vertical steering

From its inception, the FFP was presented as “an approach”, a perspective to raise the ambition level on gender equality throughout the foreign service and foreign policy agencies. Coming from the political leadership, and being repeated time and again, the FFP approach was a very strong steering signal (even if some foreign policy actors did not think their agency or embassy section was the target of that signal). In fact, some of our implementing interviewees claimed the FFP to be one of the strongest policy signals they had seen in their foreign policy careers.

That said, as “an approach,” the FFP did not specify methods or ways to achieve policy goals in any detail. This was a deliberate design. As one interviewee in the MFA leadership explained, the MFA told implementors to “apply the FFP where you are. Do it in the way that gets you results” (Interview 4_MFA). The FFP deliberately left a lot of leeway for the implementing actors to interpret and adjust the approach to the specificities of their policy area and context. Such steering had important implications for implementation, resulting in a meadow of practices where a thousand flowers bloomed. As we have shown in this report, the range of activities and methods of working with gender equality and implementing the FFP was enormous and difficult to grasp in all its diversity.

Indeed, our analysis showcases variation in *how* the FFP was implemented but also variation in *how much* it was implemented and even *whether* it was implemented at all. For some actors, general – if strong – statements from the foreign policy leadership that all Swedish foreign policy actors were to pursue a feminist approach was not enough on its own. For instance, the ISP, seems not to have implemented the FFP at all. The annual reports from the ISP do not mention any work on gender equality in arms trade, and the ISP was the only agency not willing to be interviewed for our report. The ISP, tasked with overseeing Swedish arms trade, is an agency in foreign and security policy, so there could have been no conceptual confusion as to whether the FFP applied.

Part of the answer has to do with steering: not one of the government’s appropriation directions for the ISP during 2014–2022 included any reference to the FFP or instruction to work with gender equality goals. In other words, the ISP was never instructed through formal directions to adjust its activities to the goals of the FFP. Some MFA documents (MFA, 2016a:73-4; Regeringens skrivelse, 2019) mention a seminar that was arranged in 2016 to ensure that the ISP had sufficient competence to assess the risks for gender-based violence as a result of arms trade and to apply article 7.4 of the ATT. There is no evidence in available documents or from our interviews that there was any real follow-up on whether and how the ISP was implementing the FFP. When asked about this in an interview, former Foreign Minister Ann Linde responded that the “[ISP] is one such agency where I have a hard time seeing what the FFP could be. I always get the question: ‘How can it be a feminist foreign policy when you have arms exports?’ That’s one of the lamest questions I know”. Strong general policy statements aside, the ISP was clearly never expected to implement any feminist goals.

The loose steering of the FFP as “an approach” was reinforced by the generally loose steering of Swedish foreign policy, with its exceptional amount of autonomy for implementing agencies and embassies. Not surprisingly, this resulted in a great deal of diversity,

not only in the methods used when implementing the FFP but also in the degree to which the FFP was implemented. Adding to the complexity, the FFP was not the only gender equality-related policy to be implemented. We turn to the question of parallel steering of agencies and embassies through multiple gender equality directives next.

9.1.2 Parallel steering: distinguishing the FFP from other directives

Gender equality activities by Swedish foreign policy actors were not only a matter of implementing the FFP. The Swedish Gender Equality Act was put in place in 1979, and a number of updated and specified gender equality laws and goals have been added since (e.g. Prop., 2005/06:155; Prop., 2008/09:1, Bet., 2005/06:AU11; Bet., 2008/09:AU1). Each minister, including the foreign minister, is responsible for these gender equality goals within their policy area. Gender mainstreaming has furthermore been a central component of Swedish gender equality policy since 1994.

There is a large number of other national and international laws, policies, and action plans, directing the gender equality work of agencies and embassies. The resulting complex steering processes make it difficult to isolate the effects of the FFP. For instance, a large gender mainstreaming program for Swedish agencies – *Jämställdhetsintegrering i myndigheter* (JiM) – has been ongoing and implemented in parallel with the FFP since 2013. JiM included two of the foreign policy agencies, Sida and FBA, and it tasked them with developing both their internal organization and their external activities to better reach the government's gender equality goals. Evaluations have concluded that the agencies did strengthen their gender mainstreaming work in many regards (Bjarnegård & Uggla, 2018; Statskontoret, 2019:14; SOU, 2022:4). However, because of the chronological overlap, it is difficult to disentangle the impact of the FFP from that of JiM.

Swedish foreign policy is also bound by a number of international agreements and commitments. For instance, the UN Security Council resolutions that make up the women, peace and security agenda have been crucial in the 2000s, resulting in several national action plans that detail commitments for many Swedish actors in the security sector, including FBA. The 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals (aka the 2030 Agenda) include Goal 5 on gender equality, with important implications for Swedish foreign policy. In addition, there are gender directives in various EU commitments, the 2014 UN Arms Trade Treaty and more.

These national and international gender equality commitments and directives coincide with and sometimes predate the FFP. One thus cannot draw the conclusion that all gender change in Swedish foreign policy since 2014 is a result of the FFP – clearly, other processes were at work as well. Most likely, these multiple processes were mutually reinforcing, serving to push foreign policy in the same direction. The FFP also became a unifying umbrella for all of these commitments, signaling that gender equality work is not sector specific and should be undertaken by the entire foreign policy apparatus in tandem. Disentangling the isolated impact of the FFP would be extremely difficult, if even possible, however.

We would like to raise one additional dimension of the multiple and parallel steering of foreign policy, namely the perspective of the implementors on the ground. Many of our interviewees seemed a bit exasperated with the sheer mass of steering signals and directives, explaining that they were overwhelmed with goals, instructions, action plans and other commitments. In the words of one interviewee,

We have a plethora of steering signals to handle, among which the FFP is one set. But there is also the last government's democracy initiative, and now the call to double the amount of environmental and climate aid, and so on and so forth... We have an impossible mission. There is so much to prioritize, such a plethora of steering documents, steering signals and priorities... So, to handle this, we create a grid of the various steering signals, and when they overlap and say more or less the same thing, we try to prioritize that over signals that don't align as clearly with the others. (Interview 16_Colombia)

Again, the FFP seems to have aligned with, reinforced and added to other steering signals on gender equality, prodding implementation in a similar direction. But for many implementing actors, the landscape of goals, steering documents and steering signals is overwhelming. As former Foreign Minister Margot Wallström told us, in the early days of the FFP, the critics complained that “now we have to report on something new, which nobody understands”.

Another and related reflection concerns how many cross-cutting issues an agency or embassy can handle. Our interviewees at the embassies attest that in 2022, the issue of climate change is gaining more and more traction (Interview 23_Kenya, Interview 16_Colombia), sometimes at the expense of a gender equality focus because of the complexity involved in organizing activities along multiple cross-sectional dimensions at once.

9.2 What are the lasting effects of the FFP in Swedish foreign policy?

The FFP was retracted in October of 2022. Since then, Swedish foreign policy actors have been instructed not to make reference to any “feminist” foreign policy. Descriptions of the FFP and feminist terminology were quickly removed from government websites, and the position that was formerly called the “ambassador for gender equality and coordinator of feminist foreign policy” is now simply called the “ambassador for gender equality”. But might the implementation of the FFP have lasting consequences for Swedish foreign policy?

It is important to remember that the FFP was in place only for eight years (2014–2022). During this time, the FFP was declared, formulated, and developed in complex interactions between the political leadership, MFA staff, MFA agencies and embassies, in addition to the interactions with civil society organizations and between Swedish actors and the international community. Eight years is not a very long time to formulate and implement a gender sensitive trade and security policy – the policy field of development has had much more time.

It is also important to remember that Swedish foreign policy is governed by many national and international laws and regulations, beyond the FFP, as we discussed in the section above. These continue to place gender equality demands on the contents of Swedish foreign policy.

It is furthermore difficult to assess where the FFP was heading and the counterfactual question of what would have happened to the FFP itself had it not been retracted. For some, the FFP was just beginning to take off. Trade agencies in particular had just started the challenging work of integrating FFP goals into their activities. For others, by 2022, the initial dynamism of the policy had allegedly begun to taper off. After the massive mobilization around the FFP

between 2015 and 2018, some actors claim that a certain weariness set in. The novelty wore off, the surprise effect was gone, and the weight of the multitude of mundane tasks became more notable. As a diplomat in Kenya explained: “We’ve lost some ground in the last few years. Between 2015 and 2018, there was a very strong focus [on gender equality], but then not as much [...] Those were the FFP golden years” (Interview 25_Kenya).

So, what might remain of the FFP in the Swedish foreign policy apparatus after eight years? For one, some of the learning, increased attentiveness to gender and sense of investment in gender issues is bound to last, at least for some time. Many staff members have been through consecutive trainings and seminars on gender, and personnel with gender equality competence have been recruited. The increased gender consciousness in the Swedish Foreign Service and foreign policy agencies is likely to last at least for some time.

In addition, while multilateral diplomacy is not the focus of this report, the FFP was – perhaps even primarily – directed at multilateral fora and processes. As part of the FFP, and alongside other gender equality advocates, Swedish diplomats and agency representatives pursued gender equality clauses in international agreements and other international commitments. These remain in place. As our interviewee at the National Board of Trade explained,

the fact that it has been downplayed by the Swedish side... we do not see it as a disaster, because it has been planted. We have been very active and have been at the forefront internationally and now those balls have been picked up... There are gender chapters in the EU’s bilateral free trade agreements, the OECD is on the ball, the WTO is on the ball... so there are formal structures for these issues on the international stage. (Interview 13_Kommerskollegium)

Likewise, Swedac crafted and sent a note on “Gender Equality in Standardization” to the European Organization for Accreditation (EA) in 2020. In it, the director general urged the EA to include gender equality concerns in accreditation, allegedly “the first breakthrough for gender equality in the world of accreditation”.⁴⁰ Yet another example is the so-called 2x Challenge, a G7 commitment to inspire development finance institutions and the private sector to invest in women. The idea for the 2x Challenge allegedly came from Swedfund, even if it was formally proposed by the UK at the G7 Summit in 2018 (Interview 10_Swedfund). The list of multilateral initiatives and agreements that Swedish foreign policy actors have contributed to during the FFP years can be made long. Such international agreements and commitments, in part the product of the Swedish FFP, now help direct and place constraints on the contents of Swedish foreign policy. They continue to do so even if Sweden has retracted its FFP.

A final important development is the international spread of FFPs among a range of other states. Ten or more states have now declared FFPs of their own (see list in the introduction to this report). For instance, Germany is in the midst of a process of debating and concretizing the specifics of what the FFP declaration entails for the German Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, and for Germany’s National Security Strategy. A number of additional states are joining forces under the FFP umbrella without having declared an FFP as such: in January of 2022, then-Foreign Minister Ann Linde announced a Feminist Foreign Policy + Group that includes 16 states,⁴¹ a group that has a life beyond Sweden’s FFP. In short, the international momentum around FFP no longer hinges on Swedish foreign policy.

⁴⁰ See <https://www.swedac.se/forsta-genombrott-for-jamstalldhet-i-ackrediteringsvarlden/>

⁴¹ The FFP+ Group includes Albania, Canada, Costa Rica, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Rwanda, Spain, Sweden and Tunisia.

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⁴² Here we only list sources cited in the report, for a full list of analyzed documents see Appendix 2.1 and 3.3.

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List of abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organizations
EA	European Organization for Accreditation
EBA	Expert Group for Aid Studies <i>(Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys)</i>
EKN	Swedish Export Credit Agency <i>(Exportkreditnämnden)</i>
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
FBA	Folke Bernadotte Academy <i>(Folke Bernadotteakademin)</i>
FFP	Feminist Foreign Policy
GFP	Gender Focal Point
IO	International Organizations
ISP	Inspectorate of Strategic Products <i>(Inspektionen för strategiska produkter)</i>
JiM	Gender Integration in State Agencies <i>(Jämställdhetsintegrering i myndigheter)</i>
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OP	Operational Plan
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SI	Swedish Institute <i>(Svenska institutet)</i>
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
SVT	Swedish public service television company <i>(Sveriges television)</i>

Swedac	Swedish Board for Accreditation and Conformity Assessment
UN	United Nations
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security

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Under perioden 2014–2022 bedrev Sverige, som första land i världen, en feministisk utrikespolitik. Denna rapport studerar hur och i vilken grad politiken implementerades på svenska ambassader och myndigheter. Författarna drar slutsatsen att den feministiska utrikespolitiken både ledde till en tydlig ökning, och till en höjd ambitionsnivå i jämställdhetsarbetet, men att implementeringen var ojämn och ofullständig.

During the period 2014–2022, Sweden, as the first country in the world, pursued a feminist foreign policy. This report studies to what extent and how the feminist foreign policy was implemented at Swedish embassies and public agencies executing foreign policy. The authors conclude that the policy led to a marked increase in gender equality work and a higher level of ambition, but that the implementation was uneven and incomplete.