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**DID THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION  
ACCELERATE PROGRESS?**

Dutch Beijing +10 NGO report

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This report is a condensed version of the Dutch-language NGO shadow report “*Zijn de verwachtingen van Beijing uitgekomen? Nederlandse NGO-Schaduwrapportage*”. Both documents are available in pdf form at [www.beijing10.nl](http://www.beijing10.nl). The shadow report is produced under the auspices of *Initiative Beijing +10 the Netherlands, Time for Action!*

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## INTRODUCTION

In March 2005 the UN Commission on the Status of Women will evaluate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted by 189 UN members in 1995, including the results booked since conclusions were drawn at the 2000 session (Beijing +5). In the Netherlands, the official second implementation report was sent to Parliament early September 2004. This shadow report was commissioned by the NGO Initiative *Beijing +10 The Netherlands, Time for Action!* (Initiatiefgroep Beijing +10 Nederland, Tijd voor Actie!).

This report results from research into the realisation by the Netherlands of the objectives and actions to be taken in the Beijing *Platform for Action* (BPfA). The shadow report has two sections, one dealing with Dutch national gender equality policy, the other with Dutch international gender equality policy since 1995.<sup>1</sup> Officially, in the Netherlands, there is no distinction between ‘internal’ and international gender equality policies. General gender equality policy, coordinated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (szw) provides also the framework for cross-border gender equality policy. In its policy documents and reports, szw is responsible for coordination of both national and international gender equality activities. It does not distinguish between ‘international’ and ‘national’ policies, but seldom brings its international policy to the limelight.<sup>2</sup>

*The twelve critical areas of concern including the role of the national machineries discussed in the Beijing Platform for Action consist of a lot of interesting elements that are diverse in nature. The final choice for themes to be discussed in this shadow report were chosen in consultation with a small group of women who acted as sparring partners for the reporters – all participating NGOs were invited for input. Analysis of the efforts of the Dutch government has been made using many documents, including government policy documents, budgets and annual reports, government’s (implementation) reports related to the Beijing Platform for Action,<sup>3</sup> the emancipation monitor 2004, information from NGOs and other relevant documents.*

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1 Reporters are, respectively, Wendy van der Tol and Welmoed Koekebakker.

2 szw: Meerjarenplan Emancipatie. Het emancipatiebeleid voor de korte en middellange termijn. The Hague, November 2000, pages 83-104. When, for instance, the concept ‘feminisation of poverty’ is elaborated upon exclusively for the Dutch context, see the Adviesraad van de regering voor het emancipatiebeleid: Made in Beijing, deel 11, Platform for Action, The Hague, June 1996, page 9.

3 “Beijing Now and in the Future”, The Netherlands five years after Beijing”, “The Netherlands ten years after Beijing”.



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## PART I

### DUTCH NATIONAL GENDER EQUALITY POLICY 1995 – 2004

#### DUTCH GENDER EQUALITY POLICY<sup>4</sup> IN GENERAL AND NATIONAL MACHINERY<sup>5</sup>

*Important recommendations for Dutch gender equality policy within the Beijing Platform for Action include paragraphs 196, 200, 202, 203b, 203d, 204a, 204e, 205a, 205b, 206a, 230h, 288, 297, 298, 346.*

The main objective of Dutch gender equality policy is, according to the government, “to create conditions for a pluriform society in which everyone has an opportunity to realise independent means of support, regardless of sex, in interaction with other social ordering principles such as ethnicity, age, marital status, validity and sexual preference, and in which men and women can realise equal rights, opportunities, freedoms and (social) responsibilities.” This objective has changed in practice since 1985. Substantive equality between women and men has disappeared from the agenda. General gender equality policy has changed its emphasis towards socio-economic objectives. The core target of gender equality policy has increasingly turned into the promotion of women’s economic independence through participation in the labour market.

The Dutch government and Dutch NGOs played a key role at the Beijing Conference in 1995. The Platform for Action that was adopted aimed at removing all the obstacles to women’s active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. In sum, it aimed to secure a different division of power, labour and income between women and men. Expectations from women’s organisations, politicians and others in the Netherlands on the implementation of the *Beijing Platform for Action* were high. A rather general ‘Plan of Action’ with the title “Beijing Now and Future’ was presented in September 1996. Policy implications were missing. To everyone’s surprise, it lasted several years until the government presented a Dutch Medium Term Emancipation Policy Plan<sup>6</sup> to implement the *Beijing Platform*

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4 *Gender equality* policy is also known as *emancipation* policy in the Netherlands. Both terms will be used in this report; gender equality mainly refers to the policy on the empowerment of women in general, whereas emancipation mainly refers to bodies that carry emancipation in their Dutch name, such as Emancipation Auditing Committee (Visitatiecommissie Emancipatie).

5 This Part of the report is a summary of a Dutch shadow report related to the *Beijing Platform for Action*. The Dutch report contains more references and footnotes with regard to material that has been studied.

6 Nota Emancipatie, Kamerstuk 1999-2000, TK 27061, nr. 1+2.

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for Action (2000). Five areas deemed by the government to be important to the gender equality process were selected, almost all related to economic issues: work, care and income; daily routine; power and decision-making; human rights; and knowledge society. This Policy Plan turned out to be rather disappointing. It was not concrete enough, no new innovative policies were introduced and clear benchmarks were missing. Experts from women's organisations, advisory councils, and parliamentarians later contributed to a Multi-Year Plan on Emancipation<sup>7</sup> that was drawn up to serve as the general guideline for gender equality policy up to 2010. This plan set ambitious benchmarks and objectives.

### **Dutch government is withdrawing from implementing gender equality policy**

The Medium Term Emancipation Policy Plan made it clear that the government believed gender equality was a 'collective responsibility'. The government thought it necessary to enter a permanent dialogue with others, such as social partners, business, trade and industry, political parties, provincial and local authorities, and women's organisations. The view was that these actors should each play their respective role in implementing gender equality policies and promoting women's empowerment. The government's role would be limited 'to creating the right economic, cultural and social conditions to stimulate the gender equality process'. The problem with collective responsibility just seems to be that if everyone is responsible, then no one is actually responsible.

### **Gender mainstreaming**

One of the Dutch contributions to the *Beijing Platform for Action* was the notion now called 'gender mainstreaming'.<sup>8</sup> As early as the mid-seventies, the Netherlands followed a two-track strategy on gender equality. In a 1976 policy, the need for specific policies for women was emphasised (sectoral policy), along with the need to integrate gender equality objectives in regular policies in all ministries (gender mainstreaming). Without a strong co-ordinating body, however, gender mainstreaming is difficult to bring into practice, so in 1977 the government decided to establish a Directorate for the Co-ordination of Emancipation Policy (DCE). The Netherlands were international frontrunners in following the two-track strategy and establishing a separate body mainly responsible for co-ordinating gender equality policy within the government. Due to recent changes with regard to the mandate of DCE however, the government has deliberately decided to weaken the structure of DCE and remove its co-ordinating function. DCE used to assist the Minister responsible for co-ordinating gender equality policy in stimulating and developing innovative policy in the area of equal opportunity ("boost function") and supporting the ministries with

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7 Meerjarenbeleidsplan Emancipatie, Kamerstuk 2000-2001, TK 27061, nr. 3.

8 Gender mainstreaming is 'the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in decision-making'. Council of Europe, *Gender mainstreaming. Conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices*, 1998.

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respect to anchoring equal opportunity policy in their various policy fields. Without a vigorous co-ordinating body, gender mainstreaming is not likely to be achieved.

### Instruments

The *Beijing Platform for Action* identified several instruments for implementing gender mainstreaming. In 2001, the Dutch government also outlined four categories of instruments in their Cabinet's Position on Gender Mainstreaming:<sup>9</sup> organisational instruments (committees, procedures), analytical instruments (a.o. *ex ante* evaluations, monitoring), instruments to enlarge gender expertise among government's policy officers, and law and regulating instruments. On a theoretical level, the Dutch government has thus demonstrated that a large variety of instruments to implement gender mainstreaming exist. From reading government reports and policy documents related to gender equality policy, one gets the impression that these instruments are in frequent use. However, if you look in detail at what instruments are really used, the picture changes. The more analytical instruments (such as *ex ante* evaluations) are not very frequently used, except for some experiments once in a while. And even if an instrument is used, the government does not acknowledge the implications and attendant political consequences!

### Government departmental tasks/objectives

Government departmental tasks/objectives were set for the first time in 1992. In 1998, a "Plan of Action Government Departmental Tasks and Objectives 1998-2002"<sup>10</sup> was established to cater for gender mainstreaming and its revival after the Beijing Conference. The tasks and objectives within each department had to be new tasks, should be effectuated within the mandate of the new government, and should be separate from current policy. Some government departments referred to the critical areas of concern of the *Platform for Action*, but most did not include a reference. An evaluation of this Plan of Action demonstrated that this instrument was not working very well to mainstream gender into regular policies, largely because it lacked coherence with the critical areas of concern from the *Beijing Platform for Action*. Meanwhile, the Multi-Year Plan on Emancipation had no clear link with previous departmental tasks and objectives of the Ministries.

### Gender Impact Assessments

Gender Impact Assessments (GIA) is one of the most important instruments to increase awareness of gender effects of laws and policies in all government departments. But GIA are not obligatory for those departments when developing new proposals and policies. Several proposals have been subjected to GIA since 1995. In practice, however, results and recommendations from these GIA have not sufficiently been taken into consideration. Only in a few cases have the government's proposals been changed to take women's interests into account. Moreover, the results of GIA are often coming too late for the persons involved in the law-making-process, policy

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9 Letter of 26 June 2001 on the Cabinet's position regarding Gender Mainstreaming.

10 Kamerstuk 1998-1999, TK 26206, nr. 11.

officers and members of parliament, so women's interests are not taken into account at all and nobody knows exactly what the different effects for men and women will be. If a proposal is subjected to a GIA, ministers do not normally react to its results in the explanation that is attached to the proposed bill they send to parliament.

#### **Emancipation Auditing Committee**

In the summer of 2004 an Emancipation Auditing Committee was established to review and evaluate the gender mainstreaming process within all 13 government departments. The Committee will start three years later than originally foreseen and has only a limited period (two years) to visit all departments twice and deliver its final report. Even more important is the fact that this Auditing Committee has a more limited task than originally decided. A more practical problem seems to be that the Committee should examine and evaluate gender in regular government departmental policy, but due to a lack of departmental tasks and objectives since 2002, there is hardly any policy to examine.

#### **Gender budget analysis**

The intention of using gender budget analysis was mentioned in the Cabinet's position on Gender Mainstreaming as one of the new instruments. So far, however, the government has not made any move in this direction.

#### **Emancipation monitor**

The emancipation monitor, which is published every two years by the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Office, contains a large number of statistics which present a comprehensive picture of the equality of women in the Netherlands. In 2004, the first reaction of the responsible minister to the last edition of the monitor ignored its critical conclusions about the government's timid gender equality policy. He merely summed up all current initiatives already taken without proposing changes aimed at strengthening the gender equality process in the Netherlands.

#### **Research, communication, targets, taskforces and committee**

Other instruments that the Dutch government is using are 'soft' ones such as: research, communication, targets, taskforces and committees. With regard to research, one might wonder whether the government is investigating *relevant* issues and what the government is actually doing with the outcome of research. No research has been done, for example, to examine the effects of instruments that have been developed for fighting the glass ceiling (see below).

#### **National machinery**

National machineries for the advancement of women have been established in the Netherlands to co-ordinate, promote the implementation of, execute, monitor, and evaluate policies that promote the advancement of women.

#### **Political responsibility for co-ordinating gender equality policy**

At the government level, political responsibility for co-ordinating gender equality policy resides with the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment. All other

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Ministers and Secretaries of State bear their own responsibility to integrate a gender perspective into regular policy related to their departments and fields of work (gender mainstreaming). The current co-ordinating Minister has said that he will try to effectively implement gender mainstreaming in the next three years, in order to be able to dispose of the gender equality co-ordination portfolio after the next elections in 2007. The latest change in the mandate of the DCE (see below) contravenes the intention of the Minister. In one of the following paragraphs we will discuss whether the responsible minister is even succeeding in mainstreaming his own Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

#### **Department for the Co-ordination of Emancipation Policy**

The Co-ordinating Minister is assisted by the Department for the Co-ordination of Emancipation Policy (DCE). DCE used to be a key element in the national machinery to: develop a cohesive gender equality policy; put issues on the political agenda; assist other departments with implementing gender equality policy; and monitor and evaluate all policy efforts to empower women. The tasks and structure of DCE have definitely been changed by a governmental decision of 6 October 2004, which effectively marginalised the functioning of the unit. Co-ordinating tasks have disappeared from the DCE's new mandate.<sup>11</sup> In practice, its co-ordinating role had already been attacked since 2002 and was increasingly being neglected since gender equality policy increasingly shifted towards socio-economic policy only to the neglect of other policy areas. Stimulating innovative projects and developing new policies is still mentioned, but only in relation to specific fields of work. Four separate units within DCE will remain to take care of specific fields of gender equality policy; Rights and Safety, Daily Routine and Life Course, project team Men Taking the Lead (until 1 January 2005), and Office Management.

#### **Committee for Interdepartmental Co-ordination of Emancipation Policy**

Interdepartmental co-ordination was overseen by the Committee for Interdepartmental Co-ordination of Emancipation Policy (ICE). This body is supposed to play an advisory role, but it has not functioned properly since 2002. A broad gender equality support structure outside government was established over the years, mainly by way of a *subsidy scheme*, but by 1998, different thinking led to severe changes. This led to the merger of several women's organisations into one expertise centre, E-quality, which received less money and was forced to shrink its tasks and objectives. Other women's organisations suddenly lost their subsidies entirely, which rendered passing on knowledge to others impossible. All other Ministries were obliged to subsidize women's organisations active in their respective policy fields. These subsidies were only granted in a very limited way, were stopped entirely after 2003/2004. Between 1998 and 2003 only three organisations received multi-year institutional support, namely E-Quality, IIAV and Women's Alliance. E-quality expertise centre on gender and ethnicity is no longer permitted to lobby or support the women's movement, and must limit itself to supporting and stimulating

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<sup>11</sup> One co-ordinating task remains, which is related to the budget and budget accountability.

local and national government departments in the gender mainstreaming process. E-quality was not given any power by government to really have effective access to (policy officers in) the departments. Departments are not obliged to involve E-quality experts, so the effectiveness of E-quality depends on the enthusiasm of its experts, and their ability to penetrate all departments. IIAV is only allowed to perform the task of supplying information and documentation relating to the position of women. The supporting and informing function of E-quality and IIAV towards the women's movement may no longer be executed. The third organisation, Women's Alliance, will not receive funding after 2004 and this has led to its demise. Other organisations are dependent on one-off project-related subsidies, but only if they relate to one of the priorities/ topics set by the government. Two disadvantages of the project-based scheme can be mentioned: firstly, women's organisations have to spend a lot of time and effort in trying to get enough funding for their project, instead of working on the empowerment of women. Secondly, priorities are being set by the government and these priorities do not relate at all to the *Beijing Platform for Action*, thus the projects do not necessarily have to be linked with the 12 critical areas of concern. New innovative projects not related to these priorities/topically relevant themes are therefore hampered and endangered. This became even more worrying after the enforcement of the new subsidy scheme from January 2004. Subsidy is exclusively granted to projects related to three priorities (rights and security; labour force participation and economic independence; and decision-making and management). Projects have to focus on women in vulnerable positions, mainly women and girls from ethnic minorities. These women have to be involved in the tender, the implementation and evaluation of the projects. Worrying is the fact that provincial and local authorities and so-called Quango's<sup>12</sup> can apply for grants under this subsidy scheme too. A secure infrastructure to support the gender equality process in the Netherlands is no longer guaranteed under the new subsidy system. The same holds true for the quality and effectiveness of Dutch gender equality policy, without critical contributions to the policy from women's organisations. With regard to women and girls from ethnic minorities, it deserves mention that black, migrant and refugee women in general have been given more attention in governmental policy since 2002. This is definitely a positive change, as previous gender equality policy gave little attention to these women. Despite this, however, the umbrella organisation of black, migrant and refugee women's organisations (TIVE International) has never succeeded in its applications for structural funding through the gender equality subsidies. Applications were refused, and the organisation was referred to the ministry responsible for 'minority policy'.

More and more subsidies to support women's projects, mainly in local communities, are coming from European funding programmes, such as EQUAL and the European Social Fund (ESF). In theory, these subsidies have to be result-oriented,

12 Executive bodies that operate under powers which are delegated from Ministers and government departments. These non-departmental public bodies are sponsored by the government.

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but this condition falls away in practice. Accountability for this money is directed towards the European Commission and not towards the National Parliament. One could argue that a lack of transparency towards the Dutch Parliament has been voluntarily established by the government.

The question is whether the Dutch government will still be able to fulfil its international and European obligations if the government continues to undermine the national machinery for the advancement of women (provide implementation reports, realisation of specific targets set by the European Union, subsidy scheme to support a broad gender equality support structure outside government). The government's task to co-ordinate, promote the implementation of, execute, monitor, and evaluate policies that promote the advancement of women is still imperative to achievement of the objectives of the *Beijing Platform for Action*.

### **Current implementation reports**

The Dutch government is currently filing to fulfil its international obligations with regard to implementation reports for the UN. The second implementation report on the *Beijing Platform for Action* did not contain what the UN SCW has asked for in order to be able to review the progress made by governments.<sup>13</sup> The Dutch report was not finished in the established timeframe and far exceeded the length specifications. It was only of a descriptive nature, explaining the gender equality process and government efforts, without focusing on results, objectives and linkages with the Beijing Platform for Action and its 12 critical areas of concern. The actual policy and the results that have been achieved by the government are snowed under 60-pages of text. For monitoring purposes, these kind of reports are inadequate. The same holds true for implementation reports to the UN CEDAW and the ILO.

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### **European efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action**

Interesting to note is that the Dutch government is silent about the decisions taken at the meetings of the Council on Social Affairs and Employment, during its Presidency of the European Union (EU) in the second half of 2004. Since 1998, every Presidency of the EU has begun conducting a research into a specific area of concern from the *Beijing Platform for Action* during the first half year. At the end of the second half year, the Council will agree to a set of indicators related to the topic.<sup>14</sup> At the beginning of December 2004, under the Dutch EU-Presidency, the 25 European Ministers of Social Affairs adopted several indicators related to sexual harassment in the workplace. The Dutch press release issued at the end of this

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13 Questionnaire to Governments on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000). <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/questionnaire.htm>.

14 Respectively: women's participation in power and the decision making process (1999), reconciliation of family life and working life (2000); unequal pay (2001); domestic violence against women (2002); representation of women and men in economic decision-making (2003), sexual harassment in the workplace (2004).

meeting did not mention anything about these indicators. This follow-up process to the *Beijing Platform for Action* is being implemented in absolute silence; the underpinning Council documents are not easy to find on websites of the Presidency or the Council itself.

It's about time the Dutch government provides an overview of everything it has done and concluded since 1995 with regard to the follow-up process. The indicators to every topic must be released in a more transparent manner, and it must explain the relevance attached to these indicators. The Dutch government is keen on a permanent dialogue with social partners, but is in practice not very communicative towards these partners, experts and women's organisations when it comes to the follow-up process in the EU. A letter of the Secretary of State for Social Affairs on the evaluation of Dutch laws and measures on (for example) sexual harassment in the workplace was sent to the national parliament in the same week as the above-mentioned indicators were adopted. But the Secretary of State did not communicate the adopted indicators to the Parliament and the field. The European Council on Social Affairs should make an effort to work in a more transparent manner, publish the underlying documents related to the Beijing follow-up process and even more importantly, the Council must undertake what it concluded itself: "(the Council) *Undertakes regularly to review the progress achieved and invites future Presidencies, in cooperation with the Member States, to return to issues which have previously been discussed and to assess progress in those areas with the help of the established indicators.*"

With regard to this follow-up process, the Dutch government has failed several times to deliver statistical information to the EU-Presidencies that conducted research into specific topics.<sup>15</sup> A comparison between all Member States was hampered through this lack of information. In sum, the Dutch government does not co-operate in an effective manner with other Presidencies, the government does not report on the process to social partners, experts and women's organisations and does not report to members of the national parliament, so it cannot hold the Minister and Secretary of State accountable for what they did (or did not do) in the EU-context.

## CONCLUSION

The Dutch government must explicitly show its political commitment to implement the *Beijing Platform for Action* and actively stimulate and support women's empowerment. In some reports, an explicit reference to the *Platform for Action* is included, in most gender equality policy documents and plans of actions such a reference is missing. In the policy documents and implementation reports related to the *Platform for Action* it is unclear which recommendations the government intends to or has successfully implemented. Implementation of the *Beijing Platform for Action*<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Information related to unequal pay, and women and men in economic decision-making.

<sup>16</sup> Para. 288 and 297 Beijing Platform for Action.

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requires transparency, clear objectives and accountability mechanisms, as well as time-bound targets and benchmarks for monitoring, and proposals for allocating or reallocating resources for implementation. These requirements are not fulfilled in the Netherlands.

Until 2000, gender equality policy mainly related to socio-economic objectives. Since then, the government seems to have revitalised its gender equality policy, although it did not include the complete agenda for women's empowerment, as described in the *Beijing Platform for Action*. What the government did in its Medium Term Emancipation Policy Plan 2000 was only partly related to the 12 critical areas of concern (but was not explicitly mentioned as such) and did not fully support women's empowerment in all spheres of public and private life. Nevertheless, with a lot of input from social partners, advisory councils and women's organisations, it did establish a strong Multi-Year Plan on Gender Equality with clear objectives and ambitious benchmarks in five fields. Afterwards, in 2001, the government also presented its Cabinet Position on Gender Mainstreaming, including instruments and conditions for gender mainstreaming in all departments.

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From 2002 afterwards, after a new government was installed, this Multi-Year Plan has not been implemented and there has been a distinct lack of activity regarding the Cabinet's Position on Gender Mainstreaming and the instruments mentioned. Strong instruments, such as GIA or earmarking of budgets for specific (groups of) women are under-utilised. Where in-depth studies are conducted, the government barely takes note of the conclusions and recommendations made and fails in practice to revise its policy or laws in accordance with these recommendations. Lessons to be learned from evaluations and research are thus lost. Gender budget analysis is not implemented in the Netherlands. The national machinery has been weakened since 2002; DCE was marginalized when it lost its co-ordinating function and the Interdepartmental Coordination for Gender Equality Policies (ICE) effectively is no longer functioning. The current Dutch subsidy policy is endangering the secure infrastructure of women's organisations that supports the gender equality process in the Netherlands. It seems that this government exercises its subsidy policy as an instrument to prevent critical input from women's organisations, preventing them from lobbying and influencing gender equality policy. In general, it can be concluded that this government is not interested in seeking broad support within society for gender equality policies.

## HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

*Important recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action for Dutch gender equality policy include paragraphs 112, 113, 117, 124d, 124p, 125a, 125g, 125I, 126a, 129a, 130d, 232h.*

Since 2002, violence against women is back on the government's agenda in the larger framework of 'safety'. Several positive measures have been taken in the

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fight against domestic violence, such as establishing a focal point for domestic violence, the development of a women safety index, and the foundation of an Advisory Committee on Female Genital Mutilation.

#### **Cases of violence against women not sufficiently registered**

Estimates say 80 domestic violence incidents per year result in death of the victim, but there are no accurate figures or data on the causes and consequences of violence against women. The government is (now) fully aware of the lack of up to date information on the nature and scope of domestic violence, but until recently took no action, despite specific recommendations about data related to violence against women in the *Beijing Platform for Action*.<sup>17</sup> In 2003, several pilot projects were set up to improve registration of acts of violence against women. National studies have not been undertaken to measure the effectiveness of current laws, policies and preventive measures to fight domestic violence, and the way in which local actors and authorities implement these. More attention should be focused on differences in gender and ethnicity and domestic violence. Although the government has asked for the fourth in-depth study on the prevention and combating of violence against women,<sup>18</sup> it did not show any interest in actively integrating the recommendations into new national policy to fight violence against women. The government continued its existing policy and promoted monitoring. It was only after Members of Parliament asked for more concrete action that a Plan of Action was presented in December 2003.

#### **National Rapporteur on trafficking in human beings is finally being heard**

The national rapporteur is listed as a good practice in the second national implementation report of the Netherlands.<sup>19</sup> To finance such an independent institution is one thing; to incorporate the recommendations of the rapporteur is definitely another. The rapporteur wrote in her third report of July 2004 that the government is paying nothing but lip service to the policy on trafficking in human beings. Although the government repeatedly said that this issue is highly prioritised, it only set up a Plan of Action to fight human trafficking in December 2004.

#### **Sexual harassment in the workplace, legislation not actively enforced**

Occupational health and safety regulations in the Netherlands oblige all employers to take measures to prevent sexual harassment and intimidation in the workplace. Small and medium sized companies often provide no services to their employees in cases of harassment or intimidation. The government Beijing +10 report mentions only the publication of the results of a study, a more effective instrument to really tackle the problem may be needed. The government should stimulate the Dutch labour inspectorate to actively enforce the occupational health and safety regulations, also with regard to sexual harassment in small and medium sized companies.

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17 Para. 129a.

18 Dutch second implementation report, page 18.

19 Ibid, page 21.

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### **Subsidies for shelters for women and girls under pressure**

The Dutch government should provide well-funded shelters and relief support for girls and women subjected to violence. In recent years there has been much discussion on whether or not to continue the policy of subsidies and grant schemes. The National Parliament has exerted quite some pressure to continue these subsidy schemes as it is clear that more women's shelters are sorely needed. Nowadays it is clear to the public at large that the fight against (domestic) violence needs specific attention, as do the needs of women and girls from ethnic minorities. While it is positive that a growing number of black, migrant and refugee women dare to take the step to leave their home to escape violence and seek shelter and assistance, one problem remains. Women who live in the Netherlands and do not have the necessary residential paperwork (illegal migrants) will not find shelter as the shelters will lose their grants if they open their doors to these women.

## **LABOUR, CARE AND INCOME**

*Important recommendations for Dutch gender equality policy include paragraphs 52, 58o, 68b, 152, 163, 165a, 165f, 165o, 165p, 173e, 175d, 178a, 178k, 178o, 179c, 179f of the Beijing Platform for Action.*

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### **Dutch socio-economic policy is gender blind**

If the Dutch government uses gender-impact analyses to monitor macro and micro-economic and social policies and restructure them in cases where harmful impact occurs, it uses them insufficiently. The government does not identify the short-term and long-term effects of policy measures, and this leads to conflicting laws and regulations. There has been little notion of gender perspectives and the concerns of women when preparing budgets at national or local levels.

### **Gender pay gap still 22% in labour market, even though equal pay law exists since 1975**

Over the last ten years the gender pay gap in the private sector remained open at the 2002 level of 22% (in 1995 it was 24%). For the public sector, the gap was 14% in 2002, (5% in 1995). Even if differences in the background of men and women are taken into account, the unexplained gender pay gap was 7% in the private sector in 2002, and 3% in the public sector 3%. These percentages have remained the same for years, and are usually explained by wage discrimination. Although equal pay laws have been in force since 1975, due to European Directives, these Dutch laws have not been actively enforced. Despite recommendations on equal pay in the Beijing Platform for Action, the Dutch government did not undertake concrete action until the national parliament requested it in 2000. The government then released a Plan of Action for closing the pay gap between men and women. The instruments are all related to research, advice and reports. Stronger instruments to really enforce the equal pay law could be more helpful to close the pay gap.

### Economic autonomy

Economic autonomy for women has been one of the main objectives of gender equality policy for many years. In the past, economic autonomy could be realised by way of paid labour, or, if no possibility for paid labour exists, by way of (an independent right to) social security. The current government focuses only on economic independence through paid labour. New measures seem to narrow access to social security and in fact adjust the social security system to male patterns of work. More women (and men) become dependant upon the income of their partner. The second national implementation report does not mention social security at all, and does not cover the negative changes in policy and law. The targets mentioned in the report with regard to women and the economy will not be met at all, especially if current socio-economic policy remains the same. Some remarks with regard to the good practices mentioned in the government's second implementation report:

- GIA on tax system of 1999 (page 31) did not play a significant role in the law-making process. Recommendations from the GIA were not taken on board (for example part-time workers), or just partly (fiscal advantages), after intervention from parliament. There has been no reaction from the government with regard to a second GIA related to taxes in 2002
- The Daily Routine incentive scheme (page 36) has led to some innovative experiments, but the impact is less strong than suggested. Continuation of these experiments is only guaranteed by money from the European Social Fund. None of the recommendations of the steering committee Daily Routine have been adopted by the current government,
- The so-called mother contracts (page 36) only involved four or five operating-room assistants. The University Medical Centre is not offering such contracts to other medical departments. In small and medium sized companies such contracts were already established, so it was already known that such contracts are possible for shift work.

### NAP to combat poverty and social exclusion is gender blind

In 2000, four percent of the Dutch population belonged to a household that lived on a low income. 63% of these persons were women. While the National Action Plan to combat poverty and social exclusion identifies single older women, (older) women from ethnic minorities and single parents as risk groups in general, there is little integration of social inclusion and gender policies in the NAPs and the gender dimension is not much reflected in policies proposed. The risk exposure of groups (women, ethnic minorities, elderly) is as such not analysed. Male-female differences are not taken into account when implementing targets and policy measures. The European Commission has repeatedly indicated that the Dutch government must address these gender-issues and realise a more gender-aware policy to combat poverty. In reaction to a Dutch advisory report on the NAP, from October 2004, the government is not mentioning the use of GIA to include a gender perspective or specific measures to address the needs of women.

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### **Pension problems of older women not solved**

The situation of women and pensions in the Netherlands is worrisome. The exclusion of women in pension schemes in the past has only led to partial reparation, as far as the Dutch government was obliged to do so by European case-law and directives. Other measures with regard to divorce and pensions and widows' pension, lead to the situation that many 65+ women in the coming decades will have a substantially lower income than 65+ men and have to live on the older age pension of the state only. Older black, migrant and refugee women will face even more financial problems, as they have not lived all their life in the Netherlands and did not have enough time to build up the necessary pension rights. Currently there is no overview of the actual situation and the number of women that will face difficult financial times after they turn 65 years and might risk poverty.

### **Labour participation of women increased**

Labour participation of women for paid work of more than 12 hours per week increased to 55% in 2003. Over 70% of Dutch women work part-time. Taking into account the hours worked by women (volume), participation is still far beneath the European average.

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### **Women re-entering the labour market deserve more attention... and money**

In response to pressure from the National Parliament, the government set up in 2000 a Plan of Action for women re-entering the labour market. The covenant approach has been one of the more important instruments, but it has become clear that this approach does not work. Only four out of 25 regional covenants have been established, and the target of 50,000 women entering a paid job by the end of 2005 will not be met. A positive thing to mention is that through these covenants, 15% of the intermediate efforts should be directed towards black, migrant and refugee women. Concrete problems of women are not being solved: increasing costs for childcare, in-between and after-school child care is not sufficiently provided, no right to long term care leave, discrimination and prejudices from employers, difficulties in working part-time. Another problem lies with the responsible institution. Communities are currently responsible for re-integrating those people on the labour market that depend on social assistance and for re-integrating those without social assistance, including women who would like to re-integrate in the labour market. If a woman wants to re-enter the labour market, but she does not rely on social assistance, it does not pay for local authorities to assist these women in finding a job, because they will not get money for a woman without social assistance under the system of the Law 'Labour and Social assistance' (*Wet Werk en Bijstand*). The instruments that the government announced in a letter of November 2004, for increasing women's participation on the labour market are not very helpful. The government should earmark a substantial budget for women re-entering the labour market and encourage employers to engage more women.

### **Work and care still difficult to combine**

A new Childcare Act will enter into force on 1 January 2005. In this system, three parties have to pay for childcare, namely the employer, the state government and

the parents. Expenses for childcare will be further increased, due to the relation between expenses and family income. Employers are not obliged to pay for childcare of their employees, which will make it even more expensive for parents. Childcare places have been extended, but in-between and after-school care is still a problem for working men and women. The Lisbon targets set by the European Union<sup>20</sup> in relation to childcare will not be met with the current policy. The few arrangements for short term leave and long term leave are mostly unpaid in the Netherlands. Unpaid parental leave lasts for only 13 weeks. The life course arrangement should be assisting men and women who would like to combine work and care, according to the current government. From the GIA it has become clear that this is not the case. This arrangement will hardly benefit women who would like to participate in the labour market or distribute unpaid and paid work in a more balanced way between men and women. From the GIA, the question arose whether a lot of people are able to invoke this arrangement, as it is difficult for people with a low income (youth, single parents, women and people from ethnic minorities) to save a lot of money over a longer period of time. The results of the GIA have not been taken into account by the government in the law-making process. Conclusions were neither agreed, nor adopted in the proposal. In the meantime, the proposals with regard to life course arrangements and pre-pensions have undergone several changes due to discussions with the social partners and in the national parliament. Nevertheless, these arrangements will probably not benefit women to make it easier to combine care and paid work.

#### **Female entrepreneurs not treated equally with regard to pregnancy and maternity**

With regard to discrimination and promoting equal rights, the government promised to improve the position of female entrepreneurs (page 29). In practice, a recent change to the law on (occupational) disability insurance of entrepreneurs has blocked access to this law as from 1 August 2004 and therefore to the financial allowance related to pregnancy and maternity for female entrepreneurs. This change leads to different treatment of female employees and female entrepreneurs. It may even lead to a breach of international labour law and equal treatment law. The national parliament adopted the proposal nevertheless, but forced the responsible Minister to ask advice on this issue from the Equal Treatment Commission. (advice was not yet asked in December)'.

### **WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING**

*Important recommendations for Dutch gender equality policy include paragraphs 181, 190a, 190b, 190c, 190d, 190e, 192c, 194c, 195b of the Beijing Platform for Action.*

<sup>20</sup> Lisbon target seeks to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and at least 33% of children under 3 years of age.

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## Glass ceiling

Women are still highly underrepresented in power and decision-making. To attack the glass ceiling, the government is mainly establishing 'Networks of Ambassadors' (page 43) and concrete targets to be realised by 2010. At the beginning of the work of a Network, no 'zero setting' is established, so progress due to the efforts of such networks is difficult to measure. For specific targets set by the government, progress is measured by various reports. Women in politics and public administration will be discussed in this report. This does not mean that in other areas women have reached the top. Only six percent of Dutch University professors, for example, are women. In management, business, trade and industry, the non-profit sector and science, the situation is not very positive either. The instruments that the government is using to fight the glass ceiling are not subjected to research in order to evaluate the defects of the instruments. The government identifies the Network of Ambassadors as an example of good practice in its second implementation report on the *Beijing Platform for Action*. But no research or evaluation proves this.

## Benchmark for women in decision-making positions

Recent reports show that some of the medium-term targets of 2004 for women's participation in politics have (nearly) been met, e.g. National Parliament, Cabinet, and European Parliament (resp. 39, 40 and 44%). These targets are 50%, for 2010, so progress is still needed to realise these benchmarks in the coming six years. The question is whether this realisation in 2004 relates to either the policy of setting targets by the government or to autonomous movements enacted by women in political parties themselves. The last explanation seems to be the right one. Just after the national elections in 2002, a decline in women's political participation at all levels was experienced, so these targets are never guaranteed and do not predict an increasing trend. The government allows a political party, the *Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (SGP)*, to exist in the Netherlands, even if this party directly discriminates against women's political rights. The UN CEDAW-Committee has indicated that this infringes the right to equal treatment, which is forbidden under international law.

## Government does not take the lead in appointing women

All other targets have not been met in 2004, and it is not likely that these will be met by 2010 with the current policy. The percentage of women in municipal councils has stagnated at 22%. There is by no means a balanced number of men and women in advisory councils, the position of mayor or Queen's Commissioner. In 2004, there were only 83 women mayors of a total of 430 mayors (19.3%) – the target was 30%! This is highly disappointing, especially bearing in mind that it is the government that appoints persons to these functions. The same holds true for women in taskforces, interdepartmental committees and independent administrative bodies. The government does not publish a list of women participating in such taskforces and committees and, as far as is known, women are definitely underrepresented.

### Women come off worst in new electoral system, but no change in government's proposal

In 1996, a GIA was conducted, which led to the conclusion that an electoral 'district system' would lead to less women and people from ethnic minorities in parliament. The government has recently proposed a 'mixed system', which is slightly better for women and people from ethnic minorities. The government, in its explanation to the proposal, mentions in only one paragraph that "research has shown that the new system does not change opportunities for women and ethnic minorities to engage in national politics". The relevant Advisory Council (Raad voor Openbaar Bestuur) mentioned that other systems would be better, but the government did not react to these conclusions. Recent research<sup>21</sup> showed negative effects for women in such electoral systems. A GIA would have been opportune, but was not commissioned. Another proposal is for the introduction of directly elected mayors. As mentioned above, the current percentage of female mayors is less than 20%. The new proposal does not include a GIA, but it is unlikely that this election system will lead to more women being elected.

## EDUCATION

*Important recommendations for Dutch gender equality policy include paragraphs 69, 81c, 82a, 82d, 82e, 82h, 85b, 88a, 88c of the Beijing Platform for Action.*

### Gender segregation in education, training and labour market not changed since 1996

Subsidy for girls and science, e.g. Technika 10, is mentioned in the implementation report as good practice (page 47). In practice, these subsidies have been cut back over several years, the subsidy to let girls participate in ThinkQuest have stopped mid 2003. Most of the revenues from Technika 10 come from an organisation within the technical sector. As this subsidy is also cut back, the organisation is trying to get involved in the subsidy scheme within the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. To date, they have not been successful.

Under pressure from the national parliament and the women's movement, the government established a "Plan of Action Women and Technology" in 1995. This has not been sufficiently elaborated. Gender segregation in education, training and on the labour market has not changed since 1996, despite awareness raising campaigns, plans of action, and projects. More women follow technical studies than 10 years ago, but Dutch numbers are still much lower than in other European countries and in Turkey. Several years ago ICT was argued to be one of the more promising opportunities for women's gender equality. The Multi-Year Plan on Gender Equality even dedicated a chapter to the knowledge society. It is now known that this sector is gender segregated. Measures to promote women's participation in this sector have been silently removed from the government's policy.

<sup>21</sup> M. Leijenaar, *Political empowerment of women*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2004.

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### **Female workers benefit less from life-long learning facilities paid by employer**

According to the government, life-long learning is very important for everyone. Still, in its policy, a lot of attention is given to learning related to the labour market, without a gender perspective being applied. More male than female workers are paid by their employers to study (54 to 44%) and this study is more often related to work for men than women. Female employees benefit less from life-long learning due to flex-work and part-time work. More financial resources should be allocated to women and life-long learning in order to improve their chances on the labour market. The Women's Vocational Training Schools as such have disappeared, but have been inserted into another educational system. The effect will be that women will have greater difficulty accessing these special programmes.

### **Illiteracy in the Netherlands also a problem for youth aged 16 to 25**

1.5 million people in the Netherlands are functional illiterates and have problems in reading and writing. Of these people, 250,000 are total illiterates. This is not just a problem for people from ethnic minorities (whose share is half a million), it is also a problem for young people: seven percent of people aged 16 to 25 are functional illiterate. The problem analysis does not include gender differences, so nor does the policy to tackle the problem.

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## **HEALTH**

*Important recommendations for Dutch gender equality include paragraphs 69, 81c, 82a, 82d, 82e, 82h, 85b, 88a, 88c of the Beijing Platform for Action.*

### **Right to sexual self-determination of women**

Some developments have taken place in the Netherlands with the effect that the country has lost its role of pioneer with regard to sexual and reproductive health and rights. The number of unwanted pregnancies has increased. The same holds true for the number of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV-infections. Medical insurance is not compulsory, as suggested by the government in its second implementation report; medical insurance companies are obliged to accept people, and this may lead to invaluable insurances and services. A large group of people cannot afford this insurance and consequently does not have full access to medical care. The government has decided to take the allowance for contraceptives (the Pill, IUD and sterilization) out of the system of National Health Service as from 1 January 2004. Recent research has shown that since this measure, over 29,000 women aged between 21 and 50 have stopped using the Pill for financial reasons and use another less reliable method to prevent pregnancy. The abortion rate has increased in 10 years from 5.5 to 8.7 for every 1000 women aged 15 to 44 years. The Netherlands currently does not have the lowest abortion rate in the world anymore. Women coming from ethnic minority groups other than Moroccan, Turkish, Surinam and Dutch Antilles are responsible for most of the abortions. A more targeted policy towards these ethnic women and girls is necessary.

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### Sexual educational programmes at schools dis-encouraged

It has become more difficult to reach women and girls, including women and girls from ethnic minorities, to inform them and provide them with information relating to their sexual and reproductive rights and health. The Rutger Foundation used to provide easy access to information for all (young) women who preferred not to speak with their family doctor on sex-related topics. Due to cut backs of the subsidies, this Foundation can no longer perform this task. With regard to sexual education and information, primary and secondary schools are not obliged to establish a programme to raise awareness on sexual behaviour (which includes more than just 'technical' aspects of sex). If they do decide to run such a programme, they are at liberty to determine the content. This decrease in discussions at school on sexual behaviour, including sexual orientation, might be at the heart of the recently observed diminished acceptance of homosexuality among school pupils.

## CONCLUSION

The *Beijing Platform for Action* could have been the starting point for a broad gender equality policy in the Netherlands. With the feminist analysis on participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making, governments could investigate the remaining barriers for women in their own country and create policies to ensure a changed division of power, labour and income between women and men. A broad range of instruments was mentioned to assist governments in gender mainstreaming, so as to accelerate the empowerment of women.

Until 2000, gender equality policy focused mainly on socio-economic objectives. In 2000 the government revitalised its gender equality policy, although the government did not include the complete agenda for women's empowerment as described in the *Beijing Platform for Action*. What the government did in 2000 was only partly related to the 12 critical areas of concern (but was not explicitly mentioned as such) and did not fully support women's empowerment in all spheres of public and private life. Nevertheless, with a lot of input from social partners, advisory councils and women's organisations a Multi-Year Plan on Gender Equality was established with clear objectives and ambitious benchmarks in five fields. From 2002 onwards, after a new government was installed, this Plan was not implemented. Strong instruments are under-utilised. The results of in-depth studies or GIA are seldom taken into account by the government. The government fails in practice to revise its policy or laws in accordance with these recommendations. Gender budget analysis is not implemented in the Netherlands. The Emancipation Auditing Committee should have evaluated whether gender mainstreaming was sufficiently embedded in departmental policies, in accordance with the Multi-Year Plan, as foreseen in the Cabinet's Position on Gender Mainstreaming. Departments are responsible for implementing a gender policy in their respective fields, supported by DCE and ICE. But since departmental tasks and objectives have not been set after 2002, it is difficult to evaluate something that is not in existence. However, the national machin-

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ery has been weakened since 2002; DCE has become marginalized through the loss of its co-ordinating function, ICE no longer functions properly. The current Dutch subsidy policy is endangering the secure infrastructure of women's organisations supporting the gender equality process in the Netherlands. Neither the women's organisations, nor the *Beijing Platform for Action* are sufficiently taken into account. The political commitment to actively implement the *Beijing Platform for Action*, with assistance from the women's organisations, social partners and other experts, is gone. Implementation of the *Beijing Platform for Action* requires transparency, clear objectives and accountability mechanisms, as well as time-bound targets and benchmarks for monitoring, and proposals for allocating or reallocating resources for implementation. These requirements are not fulfilled in the Netherlands.

The Gender Equality Monitor 2004, released mid December, shows a stagnation or even a reversion in the Dutch gender equality process. Even in the current economically difficult climate, it is mainly lack of commitment of the Dutch government, as indicated and exemplified above, that has led to this situation. The actual revival of and attention for gender equality policy in 2000 may have happened because a Secretary of State, only recently installed as responsible for gender equality policy, held the post from 1998 to 2002.

It is without doubt that the process of bringing about gender equality in the Netherlands is not yet complete. It is high time for a revival of interest in gender equality through decisive government policy. The government should ensure adequate mobilization of financial resources for women's empowerment and promote the use of strong instruments by all policy departments to include a gender perspective in all policies and laws. The decision made in October 2004 to get rid of the co-ordinating function of DCE is counter-productive to the objectives of the *Beijing Platform for Action*. This decision should be revoked. The government that will be elected in 2007 must not do away with the co-ordinating portfolio on gender equality policy, but should install a Minister or Secretary of State responsible for gender equality policy in order to re-accelerate women's empowerment in the Netherlands.



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## PART II

### DUTCH *INTERNATIONAL* GENDER EQUALITY POLICY 1995 – 2004

#### INTRODUCTION

By far the greatest share of Dutch international gender equality policy falls under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BuZa) and is coordinated by the department called 'Women and Development' (DSI/VR) of the Department for Social and Institutional Development (DSI).

This shadow report deals with BuZa policies, with a special focus on development cooperation.

The most obvious conclusion this report must draw is that, as of 2004, there is no overview of the policy field called Women & Development (w&d). There is no information on its successes and failures, and what caused these. Since 1995, changes both in policy and within the institutional set-up of Dutch development cooperation have made it increasingly difficult, virtually impossible even, to make the results of Dutch development aid for women visible. No institutional coordinating mechanism for Women & Development exists of comparable calibre to that which was created for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

The expectations raised in 1995 that this conference would give a new impulse to Dutch Women & Development policy have not been realised.

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#### BEIJING AND DUTCH *INTERNATIONAL* GENDER EQUALITY POLICY 1995 – 2004: INTENTIONS AND REPORTS

##### Policy intentions

The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing generated new policy accents in the field of Women and Development. In December 1995, the Minister for Development Cooperation sent a letter to Parliament, in which he announced the prospect of a strategic memorandum for Dutch policy on Women and Development.<sup>22</sup> In September 1996, the Minister of szw sent the Dutch Beijing Action Plan to Parliament '*Beijing Nu en toekomst*' ('Beijing Now and in the Future'), repeating the announcement of the strategic memorandum on Women and Development.<sup>23</sup> As of 2004, however, the status of this memorandum remains *unknown*, even within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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22 Brief van de Minister voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking aan de Tweede Kamer, 1st December 1995.

23 Beleidsbrief Emancipatie: Emancipatiebeleid 1997, Brief van de minister van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. See [www.emancipatieweb.nl](http://www.emancipatieweb.nl) Parlement 1996-1997 25006 no 1.

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‘Beijing Nu en Toekomst’ (1996) also described intentions regarding international gender equality policy in twelve critical areas. It especially elaborated on six: poverty, education, reproductive health, violence, armed conflict, and power and decision-making.<sup>24</sup>

#### Reports on the *Beijing Platform for Action* concerning international policy

Results of Dutch efforts regarding international gender equality policy are absent in the implementation reports to the UN Division for the Advancement of Women on the *Beijing Platform for Action*. The first report (1995-2000) devotes one half-page paragraph to development cooperation.<sup>25</sup> The second (2000-2004) contains one subparagraph on international gender equality policy (on women, conflict and security).<sup>26</sup>

As monitoring instruments they are absolutely inadequate and fail to meet standards set by the UN to facilitate assessment of the implementation of the *Beijing Platform for Action* during the 49<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2005.<sup>27</sup>

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24 szw: *Beijing Nu en toekomst*, The Hague, 1996.

25 szw: *The Netherlands Five Years after Beijing. National Implementation Report. Report on the Beijing Platform for Action (1995-2000)*, page 59: ‘...the Dutch government decided to concentrate its development co-operation activities on six of the twelve critical areas of concern cited in the *Platform for Action*. These areas are: women and poverty, notably the right and access to natural resources such as land and water, education, reproductive health and rights, combating violence against women, women and armed conflict, and women in power and decision-making. The Netherlands is also contributing to the development of *national machineries*, in international fora (UN, World Bank, IMF, EU) and in partnership with national governments. The evaluation of the gender equality component in Dutch development co-operation in 1998 concluded that there is still a long way to go in achieving material equality and removing structural and cultural obstacles in recipient countries. There are still far fewer women taking part in aid programmes than men, both among the beneficiaries and the implementing agencies. The Dutch government’s current strategy of concentrating aid on a small number of sectors in a few countries could be detrimental to women. It has therefore decided that an effective gender policy in recipient countries should be one of the selection criteria for the concentration of aid. (...) When the government comes to choose the relevant sectors in the selected countries it will give priority to those sectors which promote the emancipation of women.’

26 szw: *Netherlands ten years after Beijing: Second national implementation report, Report on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (2000-2004)*, pages 26-27.

27 Questionnaire to Governments on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000), <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/questionnaire.htm>.

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## DUTCH POLICY ON WOMEN & DEVELOPMENT SINCE 1995

### W&D Policy and institutional anchoring

After 1998 (new administration), institutional policy on Women and Development *ceased* to exist. There is no explicit, consistent policy document with objectives, resources and benchmarks. The initial coherence between general policy and specific policy on Women and Development, as achieved in ‘Een wereld van verschil’ (‘A World of Difference’) (1990), has been lost.<sup>28</sup> Today, the ingredients of current Women and Development policy must be painstakingly gathered from policy documents on sub-themes, fact sheets, ministerial addresses, et cetera.<sup>29</sup>

In the most recent development cooperation policy document, ‘Mutual Interests, Mutual Responsibilities – Dutch Development Co-operation en route to 2015’ (‘Aan elkaar verplicht’), the word ‘women’ appears exactly twice.<sup>30</sup> In other respects, too, it remains obscure whether, and if so, how, policy can bring about the implementation of the BPfA.

Within BuZa, responsibility for the coordination of the implementation of Women and Development policy rests with the second highest-ranking public servant. The special department (DSI/VR) for Women and Development comes under the Department for Social and Institutional Development. It employs more than twenty w&d experts in Dutch embassies in developing countries.

By the end of 1995, the following core topics were prioritised: attention for gender in macro-economic policies; women and armed conflict; reproductive rights; problems concerning girls; right to inheritance.<sup>31</sup> The two latter themes have since disappeared as topics in policy documents. In the *general* policy document ‘Mutual Interests, Mutual Responsibilities’ the emphasis is on education, reproductive health, HIV/aids, and environment and water. No explicit reference to the relevance and importance of these topics for women and girls is made. Gender perspectives have not been integrated into the policy document. For the period 2004-2007, the topics given priority by DSI/VR for Women and Development are the alleviation of poverty, peace and security, and human rights.

Although, through the years, the core topics for Women and Development have shifted, four themes have persisted: alleviation of poverty, women’s rights, reproductive health and reproductive rights; and women and conflict.

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28 Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Een wereld van verschil. Nieuwe kaders voor ontwikkelings samenwerking in de jaren negentig, The Hague, 1990.

29 See [www.minbuza.nl](http://www.minbuza.nl), the section on Development Cooperation.

30 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mutual Interests, Mutual Responsibilities – Dutch Development Co-operation en route to 2015, The Hague, 2003.

31 See footnote 22.

### The Evaluation of Women & Development policy

The *last* comprehensive evaluation of the policy theme Women and Development was the 'IOB-evaluation Women and Development' (1998).<sup>32</sup> This focused on the period 1985-1996. The key questions that were examined were: What are the results of the Dutch aid programme for women in developing countries and how did the women and development policy contribute to this?<sup>33</sup> The findings were ambiguous. Positive and negative features were identified regarding both effectiveness and efficiency. However, in 1996 more women were involved in bilateral aid projects than in 1985 and this had various positive consequences for them. Their increased involvement can be attributed to the fact that a lot of activities have become more relevant to women. A second observation was that more money benefited women directly, mainly because of the Women's Fund. The report's conclusions contained suggestions for improvement.

BuZa wrote an official reaction which was sent to Parliament, but this was never placed on the agenda, probably due to a change in government.

In the official reaction (December 1998), the new Minister promised to follow a three-track policy:

- To support the empowerment of women
- To promote gender equality and equal representation of women and men in the mainstream of Dutch development cooperation
- Overall quality improvement of the mainstream through the contribution of women (transformation).<sup>34</sup>

This was elaborated upon in operational intentions regarding the selection of countries, sector choice and institutional embedding. However, these intentions were not integrated into the new policy frameworks for international development cooperation formulated in 1999. (see pages 32, 33, 34 and 35)

The conclusions of the IOB evaluation were ignored when new policies were developed. No use was made of the lessons it offered. The Women's Fund, assessed very positively, disappeared soon thereafter and was abolished in 2002. As of 2004, no evaluation of the integration of gender perspectives into general policies of development cooperation has been undertaken.

### Gender equality objectives after Beijing: a responsibility of the Ministries

The *one and only time* BuZa formulated clear, concrete tasks regarding gender equality was in 1999, for the period 1999-2002. This had been agreed upon in the

32 Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB): Women and Development, Policy and implementation in Netherlands development cooperation 1985-1996. Evaluation report, The Hague, 1998.

33 Ria Brouwers: Erfgoed Vrouwen en Ontwikkeling. Lezing voor Vrouwenberaad Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, The Hague, 1st October 1998.

34 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Reactie van minister Herfkens op de evaluatie van het beleid Vrouwen en Ontwikkeling, December 1998.

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1998 coalition agreement of the new administration. Each Ministry was expected to formulate three tasks. BuZa chose for the period 1999-2002:<sup>35</sup>

- 1 To mainstream gender and poverty as criteria within the program of macro-economic support for developing countries.
- 2 To safeguard reproductive rights of (female) refugees.
- 3 Gender mainstreaming within the OSCE.

The interim report (2002) on these tasks stated: 'The three tasks have for the most part been executed.'<sup>36</sup> However, the final report published two months later, stated that only the second task had been carried out, while the first and third tasks still awaited completion.<sup>37</sup>

It is justified to conclude there is neither continuity nor coherence, because:

- The three tasks do not match the six critical areas of concern of the BPfA chosen earlier as priorities.
- The reports sometimes contradict each other and the language used is extremely veiled.<sup>38</sup>
- Nothing is reported on results or on follow-up.

Gender mainstreaming is the central policy strategy, in addition to the three specific, concrete gender equality tasks. The strategy for mainstreaming has been elaborated in the policy document 'Gender Mainstreaming: een strategie voor kwaliteitsverbetering' ('Gender Mainstreaming: a strategy for quality improvement').<sup>39</sup> The core of mainstreaming is a two-track strategy: the integration of the gender perspective in all areas of regular policy, and the implementation of specific policy aimed at women.

For the period from 2002 onwards (since the introduction of a new cabinet) no new Interdepartmental Plan of Action with tasks for each Ministry was drawn up. The responsibility was delegated to the Ministries themselves. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not formulate any explicit gender equality tasks. Monitoring is thus non-existent, and reports on progress are no longer made.

In 2004 an auditing committee has been established, after a three-year delay, to assess the quality and the results of concrete actions and to judge whether the

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35 szw: Netherlands Interdepartmental Plan of Action on Gendermainstraming 1999-2002, The Hague, 1999, pages 15-22.

36 szw: Interdepartementale Overzichtrapportage Gender Mainstreaming, The Hague, October 2002, page 4.

37 szw: Actieplan en Eindrapportage Emancipatietaakstellingen Departementen 1999-2002, The Hague, December 2002, page 97, and pages 113-117.

38 A picture of veiled language: 'All of this has a positive effect on the realization of this task and on the different ways in which this task offers points of departure for gender mainstreaming, that will be launched in different ways.' szw: Actieplan en Eindrapportage Emancipatietaakstellingen Departementen 1999-2002, The Hague, December 2002, page 114.

39 szw: Gender Mainstreaming; een strategie voor kwaliteitsverbetering, The Hague, June 2001.

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embedding of gender equality issues into regular government policy is making sufficient progress. In January and February 2005 the committee will be visiting BuZa.

*Conclusion:* the Netherlands do not meet the conditions for the implementation of policy clearly formulated in the BPfA, that is ‘transparency, (...) clear objectives and accountability mechanisms (Paragraph 288) and ‘Implementation strategies, (...) time-bound targets and benchmarks for monitoring.’ (Paragraph 297)

## **CHANGES IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICIES AND CONSEQUENCES FOR WOMEN & DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

From 1999 on, three new policy strategies in international development cooperation were introduced: the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs; introduced by the World Bank), the Sector Wide Approach (SWAP; Sectoral Approach in the Netherlands) and the introduction of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs 2000).

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### **The PRSPs**

The PRSPs, introduced as a precondition for debt relief, have become national development plans with national budgets, with the aim to formulate a coherent policy framework for development. Governments of donor and recipient countries decide which sectors qualify for cooperation, consulting both the private sector and NGOs (including women’s organisations).

A gender audit of the 13 PRSPs, produced in 2002, concluded that the gender content of most of the PRSPs was insufficient, while in some it was even totally absent.<sup>40</sup> Attention paid to gender, if present, was limited to a separate chapter or separate paragraph about women as a ‘crosscutting topic’. This neglect is also apparent in the sectoral focus and budgets. In the case of macro-economic support the attention paid to gender evaporates completely.

*Conclusion:* PRSPs, as national development plans, lack both a gender analysis and strategies to promote gender equality. In the analysis of poverty, as well as in the analysis of macro-economic priorities, gender mainstreaming has been a failure. In most cases, women and women’s organisations have never or only scarcely been consulted.

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40 Elaine Zuckerman and Ashley Garrett: Do Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) Address Gender?

A Gender Audit of 2002 PRSPs. A Gender Action Publication [www.genderaction.org](http://www.genderaction.org), 2003. Eight PRSPs use gender in an eclectic way, based on an out-of-date WID approach. The remaining two don’t mention gender at all. Only two PRSPs promote women’s rights. Not one PRSP introduces a gender perspective into structural adjustment measures like trade liberalisation en privatisation. In short: a gender lens is lacking.

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## Sectoral Approach

The Sectoral Approach was introduced in the Netherlands in 1999, to reorganize the implementation of bilateral development aid policies: the concentration of aid on a limited number of sectors, based on approved sector plans in relation to the PRSPs. Its points of departure are: good governance and a sound macro- and socio-economic policy, local decision-making and political responsibility (ownership), coherence and coordination of aid. The number of recipient countries was limited too, based on the following criteria: the extent of poverty, good governance and a sound macro- and socio-economic policy. For the implementation of the sectoral approach women have been defined as one of the five so-called crosscutting policy themes next to good governance, poverty alleviation, institutional development, and environment.<sup>41</sup>

In practice, neither the existence of a Women & Development policy, nor the willingness to develop it has functioned as an assessment criterion for good governance or good policy. Sometimes ownership was used as an excuse: after all, the recipient country didn't ask for it, or let it be known that certain forms of women's equality clashed with local culture or religion. In this manner, ownership leads to the exclusion of women. No country has ever been turned down because it had no Women & Development policy.

Regarding the choice of sectors, assessment on the basis of relevance to Women & Development has also been noncommittal. The assessment was often dependent on the input of the w&d expert employed by the embassy, when one was present. The assessment related to sectors for which other colleagues were accountable. In not a single country has Women & Development has been prioritised as a sector or crosscutting theme. Consultation with civil society organisations almost never occurred, and then often only after plans had already been decided upon.

Thus, the sectoral approach has led to the demise of gender equality as a policy objective. Regarding the choice of sectors and countries, no assessment of the pursuit of a Women & Development policy is obligatory. The emphasis on local ownership has sometimes resulted in the exclusion of women from policy priorities. In the dialogue with civil society organisations, women's organisations have been insufficiently consulted.

## Millennium Development Goals

A third important international development that has influenced both Dutch development cooperation policy in general and Women & Development policy, is the adoption in 2000 of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a 'road map' for the implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration. The MDGs are based on the outcomes of the various UN Development summits held in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The recent policy paper 'Mutual Interests, Mutual

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<sup>41</sup> GAVIM and the Sectoral Approach, Working document, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, The Hague, 2000. In the meantime, the GAVIM method has been abandoned.

Responsibilities – Dutch Development Co-operation en route to 2015', refers to the Dutch obligation to direct its efforts to the realisation of the MDGs.<sup>42</sup>

Within the international women's movement there has been much discussion on the question whether, and if so, how, the MDGs can be used to improve the position of women.<sup>43</sup> Here, the incomplete and hidden agendas of the MDGs have received much criticism: the MDGs chop the women's agenda into little pieces, address issues only partially, keep silent about violence against women, and are part of a neo-liberal agenda that ultimately undermines the position of the poorest women.<sup>44</sup>

- No attention has been paid to the consequences of privatisation and deregulation, realised through free trade agreements etc.
- Goal 3, dealing with gender equality and empowerment, is reduced to one target and four indicators
- Indicators are limited, inadequate and only quantitative, keeping qualitative objectives (for instance empowerment) out of sight
- 'Ghettoisation' of gender into women specific sectors<sup>45</sup>
- MDGs do not acknowledge that human rights are indivisible
- Exclusion of sexual and reproductive rights under the influence of fundamentalism and morality
- The MDGs do not deal with war and conflict, while these pose the biggest threat to women, their security, status and development

42 See footnote 32.

43 For a report about the MDGs, see <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> and <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/html/about.shtml>. For gender specific reports on the MDGs, see <http://www.mdgender.net/>. Goal 2 deals with primary education for girls and boys; goal 3 deals with gender equality and empowerment; goal 5 deals with women in their role as mothers; and goal 6 lists special attention for pregnant young women in the age group of 15-24.

44 Caren Grown and Geeta Rao Gupta: From Promises to Action: Recommendations for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Millennium Project, Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, February 2004, <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/document/tf3genderinterim.pdf>. Many articles about the MDGs published by women's organizations are more or less critical of them. See for instance Ana Elena Obando: Women and the Millennium Development Goals, Women's Human Rights Net Issue, November 2003, <http://www.whrnet.org/>; AWID <http://www.awid.org> search parameter MDGs; WIDE News no.11, <http://www.eurosur.org/wide/>; WEDO <http://www.wedo.org/publicat/mdg1.htm>; WICEJ: Seeking Accountability on Women's Human Rights, New York, 2004, <http://www.wicej.org>.

45 See: UNDP, Gender Unit of the Bureau for Development Policy (BDP): Annex V: MDG-Reports: a look through a gender lens. Executive summary, page 69. In this study, the MDG reports from 13 countries were scanned for three parameters: 1) do they contain gender perspectives, differing from goal 3; 2) do they mention women's issues other than

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These criticisms are extremely relevant for Dutch development cooperation, since the MDGs are central to present-day development cooperation policy. Mainstreaming of gender equality still is the strategy for ‘promoting equality between women and men in multi- and bilateral programs and by specific support to gender equality and empowerment activities.’<sup>46</sup> Yet, neither the budget nor policy documents clarify the consequence of mainstreaming. They don’t mention empowerment. The new policy strategy assumes an implicit attention to gender in implementing the priorities of ‘Mutual Interests, Mutual Responsibilities’.

However, from examination of the actual implementation of Women & Development policy from 1995 until 2004, we must conclude that, even with a powerful, explicit policy in place, gender does **not** automatically get the attention it needs unless a number of clear preconditions are fulfilled.<sup>47</sup>

## **INSTRUMENTS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

### **Policy instruments**

Since the end of the eighties, a number of policy instruments have been developed for the implementation of Women & Development policy. The Women & Development test, for instance, to assess project proposals, or the Gender Assessment Study, to analyse the situation of women in the project area in an early stage and to incorporate the outcome in the project proposal. A target figure was set: in 1998, at least 50% of the expenditures for activities financed by the Netherlands that were of importance to women would have to meet the so-called OECD/DAC/WID criteria. The instruments’ emphasis is on the preparatory phase of projects, hereby neglecting the need for instruments in the following phases of the project cycle. With the transition to the Sectoral Approach, the PRSPs and the MDGs, the importance of the institutional anchoring of gender has been lost.

Today, overall knowledge of which Women & Development instruments worked and which failed to work is missing. Moreover, staff at the embassies and the Ministry are not informed about which instruments to use. The range of w&d policy instruments is not being expanded.

During recent years, BuZa officials have received almost no Women & Development training.

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46 See website *www.minbuza.nl*, the section on Development Cooperation. (The section with information on gender and gender mainstreaming is only available in Dutch).

47 Like, among others, the five preconditions mentioned in the letter to Parliament, by the Assistant Secretary of Social Affairs and Employment: Kabinetsstandpunt gender mainstreaming, June 2001: commitment of the political and official top; an explicit gender equality policy with clear objectives; the establishment of responsibility; the availability of gender expertise; the availability of resources (human and financial) and instruments.

## Women's Fund

The Women's Fund, founded in 1986, grew steadily from 2 million guilders in 1986 to 44 million guilders (approximately 20 million euros) in 1995. The fund was frequently called upon during the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. After that, its budget remained constant, at a level of about 20 million euros a year. The Women's Fund was a separate fund, intended for financing special activities to promote women's gender equality. The largest annual contributions went to Women's World Banking, INSTRAW and UNIFEM. The Women's Fund has been positively assessed.<sup>48</sup> It has contributed to the expansion of the international women's movement and the worldwide debate on emancipation and gender equality. From 1992 on, the Women & Development experts at the embassies had control of a part of the Women's Fund.

At the start of 2002, the Women's Fund was abolished. BuZa thus lost its only financial benchmark for the support of gender equality activities. Financial support to UNIFEM and INSTRAW were ended or cut back. Current financial support to women's organisations can no longer be traced and accounted for. Women & Development activities can now be financed out of the budgets allocated per country, but here they have to compete with other sectors and activities. There is at present no insight into the actual level of expenditure that really benefits women, gender equality and empowerment.

## Monitoring

The monitoring of policy results regarding gender equality and empowerment demands that from the start clear objectives are built into development intervention, instead of being added to the process midway.<sup>49</sup> This is not the case in the current policy called 'Mutual Interests, Mutual Responsibilities' and the international development cooperation approaches behind it (the PRSPs, the Sectoral Approach, and the MDGs). If gender mainstreaming occurs, it cannot be traced. Neither has the recent emphasis on result-based planning and accountability been used to increase the visibility of gender equality objectives. The method used is based on the log frame, that is, the formulation of 'Objective, Result, Activities, Means' (DRAM in Dutch) as part of the interdepartmental planning system 'Van Beleidsbegroting tot Beleidsverantwoording' (VBTB) ('From Policy Budget to Policy Accountability').<sup>50</sup> VBTB aims to strengthen the connection between budget and accountability, and between budget and performance, much more than before. It is intended to link qualitative standards to policy objectives. Although, in principle, this could be applied to gender equality goals and objectives, this does not happen. In addition, the emphasis on quantitative results is at the cost of the mapping of

<sup>48</sup> IOB, see footnote 34.

<sup>49</sup> For an elementary review of strategies see DAC/OECD: *Effective Strategies for Promoting Gender Equality*. Prepared for OECD/DAC Network on Gender Equality by Juliet Hunt, 2004.

See also DAC/OECD: *DAC Guidelines for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation*, 1999, page 24.

<sup>50</sup> This is the Dutch equivalent of Result Based Management.

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processes of social change. DRAM offers too little space for qualitative and process indicators, which are of great importance precisely for the assessment of the results of gender equality policy.

### Evaluations

Evaluations are an important instrument to reflect and draw lessons from actual implementation of policies and to provide recommendations to improve performance in the future. The politicians responsible for development cooperation have repeatedly stated the necessity of the integration of a gender perspective into evaluations, but there has been no follow-up.<sup>51</sup>

The general guidelines for evaluations don't include a gender perspective. Gender expertise is no systematic point of concern when external evaluators are selected.

As of 2004, result measurement will be directly related to the result based management model, as elaborated in the 'Regeling Prestatiegegevens en Evaluatieonderzoek Rijksoverheid' (RPER) (Regulation Performance Data and Assessment of the National Government), which has come into effect in 2002. This regulation contains no specific instructions on the gender aspects of evaluation. In a recent study of the OECD/DAC, evaluations were used as a source of information about the achievements of bilateral donors in the field of gender.<sup>52</sup> From this study, it may be concluded that evaluations constitute a poor indicator for Dutch achievements concerning gender equality, and the Netherlands demonstrates little capacity to make efforts in the field of gender equality public.

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- 51 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Reactie van minister Herfkens op de evaluatie van het beleid Vrouwen en Ontwikkeling, 1998. '...The 1987 action program Women and Development included as an instruction for the assessment and monitoring, that Women and Development focal points must form an integrated part of it. This program ended in 1990. Although the task assignment for Women and Development experts at the embassies mentions the supervision of the integration of Women and Development focal points into monitoring and assessment, in my view this aspect must be raised more explicitly in the bilateral program.' The present Minister gives high priority to monitoring and assessment, but not to a built-in gender perspective. ('Mutual Interests, Mutual Responsibilities')
- 52 Juliet Hunt and Ria Brouwers: Review on Gender and Evaluation. Final Report to DAC Working Party on Evaluation, October 2003 and summary in: OECD/DAC: Effective strategies for promoting gender equality. Prepared for the OECD/DAC Network on Gender Equality by Juliet Hunt, 2004.

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## CONCLUSION

Dutch International Gender Equality Policy does not comply with the five preconditions for gender mainstreaming (see footnote 47).

The Women and Development policy is not institutionally anchored; it is not even put down in writing. Instruments are insufficient and those that exist are not systematically applied. No budget is allocated for gender equality activities.

Responsibility for the implementation of the Beijing *Platform for Action* is being left to governments in developing countries. The Netherlands does not comply with the conditions for funding clearly formulated in the BPfA, that is 'Adequate financial resources should be committed at the international level for the implementation of the Platform for Action in the developing countries (...) increasing the share of (official development assistance) funding for activities designed to implement the Platform for Action. Furthermore, countries involved in development cooperation should conduct a critical analysis of their assistance programmes so as to improve the quality and effectiveness of aid through the integration of a gender approach.' (Paragraph 353)

This does not alter the fact that some Dutch embassies and some departments in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs implement useful and good work for the benefit of women. However it is not visible, cannot be traced, and cannot be accounted for. In 1995, at the conference in Beijing, reproductive and sexual rights of women were a priority for the Dutch government. Up to now the attention for these rights remains, but *management by speech* seems to have become the most practiced strategy for implementation.

All of this implies that the implementation of the Beijing *Platform for Action* is a noncommittal, non-obligatory cause. After an initially promising start, with the formulation of policy intentions (in 1995 and 1996) and the suggestions for improvement provided by the IOB evaluation (in 1998), attention for the implementation of the BPfA has progressively waned to the point where it has now become completely invisible.