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Inclusivity in Action

Evolution of Feminist Principles in India's Foreign Policy

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Introduction: The evolution of FFP globally

The feminist foreign policy (FFP) formally emerged in 2014 when [Sweden](#) became the first country to adopt it. Since then, many nations have followed suit and there has been a slow uptick of many countries embracing FFP principles even if their policies are not explicitly labelled as 'feminist'. The long-term effects of these policies remain to be seen.

The roots of FFP [can be traced back](#) to resolutions like the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) [1325](#), the [Beijing Declaration](#) and Platform for Action, and other international agreements focusing on gender mainstreaming.

The International Centre for Research on Women [explains](#) FFP as "Feminist Foreign Policy is the policy of a state that defines its interactions with other states and movements in a manner that prioritises gender equality and enshrines the human rights of women and other traditionally marginalised groups, allocates significant resources to achieve that vision."

While definitions of FFP vary, its core principles remain consistent and revolve largely around the 3Rs – Rights, Resources, and Representation. These were introduced by Margot Wallstrom, former Foreign Minister of Sweden, and have subsequently been built upon by other countries to ensure a more equitable process of foreign policy making. The principle of 'Rights' ensures that the inalienable human rights of women and marginalised groups are respected and protected. 'Resources' refers to allocating adequate financial and other resources to support gender equality initiatives. 'Representation' involves promoting the equal representation of women and marginalised groups in all decision-making processes.

As of July 2024, 16 countries have formally adopted FFP, or have announced the intent to do so. Countries having FFP [include](#) Canada (2017)¹, France (2018)², Mexico (2020), Spain (2021), Libya (2021)³, Luxembourg (2021), Germany (2021), The Netherlands

1 Canada began with a 'Feminist International Assistance Plan' in 2017.

2 France has a 'Feminist Diplomacy' approach in place since 2018.

3 Libya has not made a formal policy announcement yet.

(2022), Chile (2023), and Slovenia (2023). Some countries have also announced their intentions to adopt FFP are Colombia (2022), Scotland (2022), and Mongolia (2023).

In [2022](#) Sweden decided to reverse its FFP. However, the [FFP legacy](#) is hard to undo, with certain principles embedded in governance structures over time and many policies within Sweden having remained despite a change in politics, underscoring a very need for principles to be embedded within governance systems and not be subject to the vagaries of political parties and alliances.

In policymaking discourse, we see a shift in terminology that previously centred 'women', to a more expansive notion that centres gender or human security, highlighting that gender equality has an all-of-society benefit. Terminology evolved from [Women in Development](#) (WID), [Women and Development](#) (WAD), and more [recently](#) to [Gender and Development](#) (GAD). Within India this was seen through the "Women-Led Development slogans". The different definitions of feminism, women and development highlight the various concepts and approaches that exist globally and historically. In the developing world, countries in regions such as Southeast Asia prefer using the term gender mainstreaming in the context of FFP, gender and development discourse. While Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) currently [does not use the FFP label](#), it is prioritising gender mainstreaming whether it be from the ASEAN Women Leaders' Conference in 1975 to 2021-2025 (ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework most recently). ASEAN is one example to illustrate that the locus of policy discussion on feminist principles at the highest level is no longer only in the Western world, but is seen in unique forms in Latin America, Africa, South Asia, and the Indo-Pacific, often rooted in local contexts.

Feminist principles in Indian context

Feminist principles in India must be understood within the country's complex socio-cultural fabric, which includes numerous marginalised groups. At its core, FFP is about inclusion, and inclusivity in policy-making is essential to achieve equitable outcomes.

In recent years, India has been engaging with the principles of FFP in its foreign policy though this is not explicitly stated and is not based on any formal structure. Across India's foreign policy engagements, development cooperation initiatives and domestic policies gender mainstreaming efforts have been on the rise. This was explicitly seen in India's Presidency of the Group of Twenty (G20), where '[Women Led Development](#)', a key priority during the G20 agenda, emerged at an international level.

In an Indian context, feminist principles are not limited to advocating for women's rights but also about addressing the systemic inequalities faced by marginalised communities. When viewed through an intersectional lens, this includes Dalits and marginalised castes, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other socio-economically disadvantaged groups, whose voices can inform [foreign policy making](#).

Key principles include:

- Using gender as a platform for a broader idea of inclusion: Gender equality remains a pervasive challenge and serves as an entry point for a more comprehensive discussion on inclusion. Addressing gender disparities can create a more inclusive dialogue that encompasses all marginalised groups.
- Contextualising feminism and moving beyond terminology: The concept of feminism and the terminology associated with FFP is evolving and has been a point of contention globally. It is essential to adapt the principles of feminism to fit different cultural and social contexts, focusing on practical outcomes. By prioritising actions and results over labels, it is possible to advance the goals of FFP in a way that resonates with diverse communities and addresses their unique challenges.
- FFP in practice before theory: In India, the implementation of FFP principles has preceded theoretical frameworks. This bottom-up approach emphasises learning from existing practices and grassroots movements.

From a domestic perspective, gender mainstreaming and the role of women in Indian society and the economy is increasingly a more prominent part of public discourse, and

has moved beyond a development focused recipient model to the creation of systems that prompt growth. An example of one the most recent developments in the promotion of women's rights, particularly in terms of political representation was the passage of "[THE CONSTITUTION \(ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTH AMENDMENT\) ACT, 2023](#)" which was passed by the Indian Parliament in September 2023. This legislation, building on previous legislation for women in politics, paves the way for the reservation of women in India's national and state legislatures amounting to one-third of the total number of seats in these legislative bodies. While there is criticism around such reservation, the Indian experience at the village councils dictate that in the long term it has numerous positive cascading effects.

Similarly, there has been a focus on areas such as financial inclusion, where there has been notable progress in increasing women's participation in the financial system through various programmes. Schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), which is based on the Aadhaar ID system for KYC, have led to a [greater level](#) of financial inclusion of bank accounts in the country. Under the JAM Trinity, which includes Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar, and mobile numbers, the number of accounts has surged from 47.2 million in March 2015 to 462 million by June 2022. Of these accounts, 56 per cent amounting to 260 million accounts are owned by women.

Additionally, the Government of India in the last few years has also launched other measures focusing on women. Schemes like [Stand-Up India](#) focus on financing women entrepreneurs from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities. Beyond schemes and proposals that are targeted towards women, other government initiatives such as a [PM Ujjwala Yojana](#) or the [Jal Jeevan Mission](#) indirectly ensure increased health and security benefits for women within the larger community systems. While beneficial, the scale is still a challenge.

Women in Indian foreign policy

Gender has been integral to Indian foreign and domestic policy since Independence. A notable example of this on the global stage was India's active participation during the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Indian delegate [Hansa Mehta](#), one of only two female delegates on the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1947-1948, played a crucial role in advocating for gender-inclusive language. She is historically credited with proposing the change from "All *men* are born free and equal" to "All *human beings* are born free and equal" in Article 1 of the UDHR. Here we outline India's stance on the three key principles of FFP: Rights, resources, and representation.

Before discussing the representation of women in India's diplomatic service and foreign policy, it is essential to look at the historical context on women's political representation in India. Since the passage of the [73rd](#) and [74th](#) Constitutional Amendments in 1992, women's participation in local governance has increased significantly. This is especially evident in their roles as [sarpanch](#) (village leader) and members of [deliberative bodies](#) in local governments. At a national level, the 17th Lok Sabha (2019) saw the highest representation of women at 14.36 per cent, which in the most recent 18th Lok Sabha (2024) saw a minor decline to [13.36 per cent](#). While fluctuating, women's role in political representation and decision-making has been evolving and becoming a larger part of Indian public discourse in general. This not only provides a greater space to promote women's rights in the domestic sense, but also in India's foreign policy.

Gender became a focal point in India's diplomatic service with the appointment of Chonira Belliappa Muthamma, the first female officer in the Indian Foreign Service (IFS). Her landmark [case in the 1970s marked the end of the](#) practice of denying promotions to married women IFS officers – Muthamma had to sign an undertaking stating that she would give up her job if she was married. The 1979 [case](#), "C. B. MUTHAMMA Vs. UNION OF INDIA & ORS," led to the end of this discriminatory practice, paving the way for future women officers in the IFS. Since then, the representation of women in the IFS has significantly increased.

In 2021, India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar on including women and their perspectives on foreign policy had [remarked](#): "I agree that we need to look at the world from the perspective of women, we need a gender-balanced foreign policy. We need to look at three things here: Getting more women to engage with foreign policy issues, reflect women's interests in foreign policy, and bring in a feminist perspective to foreign policy." This

statement by the minister highlights the recognition of the need for a gender perspective in Indian foreign policymaking.

As of July 2024, women hold only 11.67 per cent of senior leadership positions within the Ministry of External Affairs, compared to 13.11 per cent in August 2023. There are 21 women serving as heads of Indian missions abroad in July 2024, compared to 24 women in August 2023. At the junior level, such as Under Secretary, women’s representation is higher, at 21.82 per cent, which, however, is a drop from the August 2023 figure of 28.57 per cent.

Table 1: Gender breakup of MEA Division Heads as of July 2024

Total No. of Divisions ⁴	Total Heads of Divisions ⁵	Men	Women
58	60	53	7

Source: [Compiled by Kubernein Initiative](#)

Table 2: Ambassadors, High Commissioners, and Heads of Mission as of July 2024⁶

Missions abroad	202, in 149 countries and at multilateral organisations ⁷
Total heads of mission (Ambassadors, High Commissioners, Consul Generals)	182
Total men	161 (88.46 per cent)
Total women	21 (11.53 per cent)

4 Heads of Division from the following sources: MEA organogram, MEA Divisions website, as of 1 July 2024. The MEA’s 2023 [Annual Report](#) states that there are 58 Divisions; some Divisions have more than one head. Hence, there are 60 Heads of Divisions for 58 Divisions.

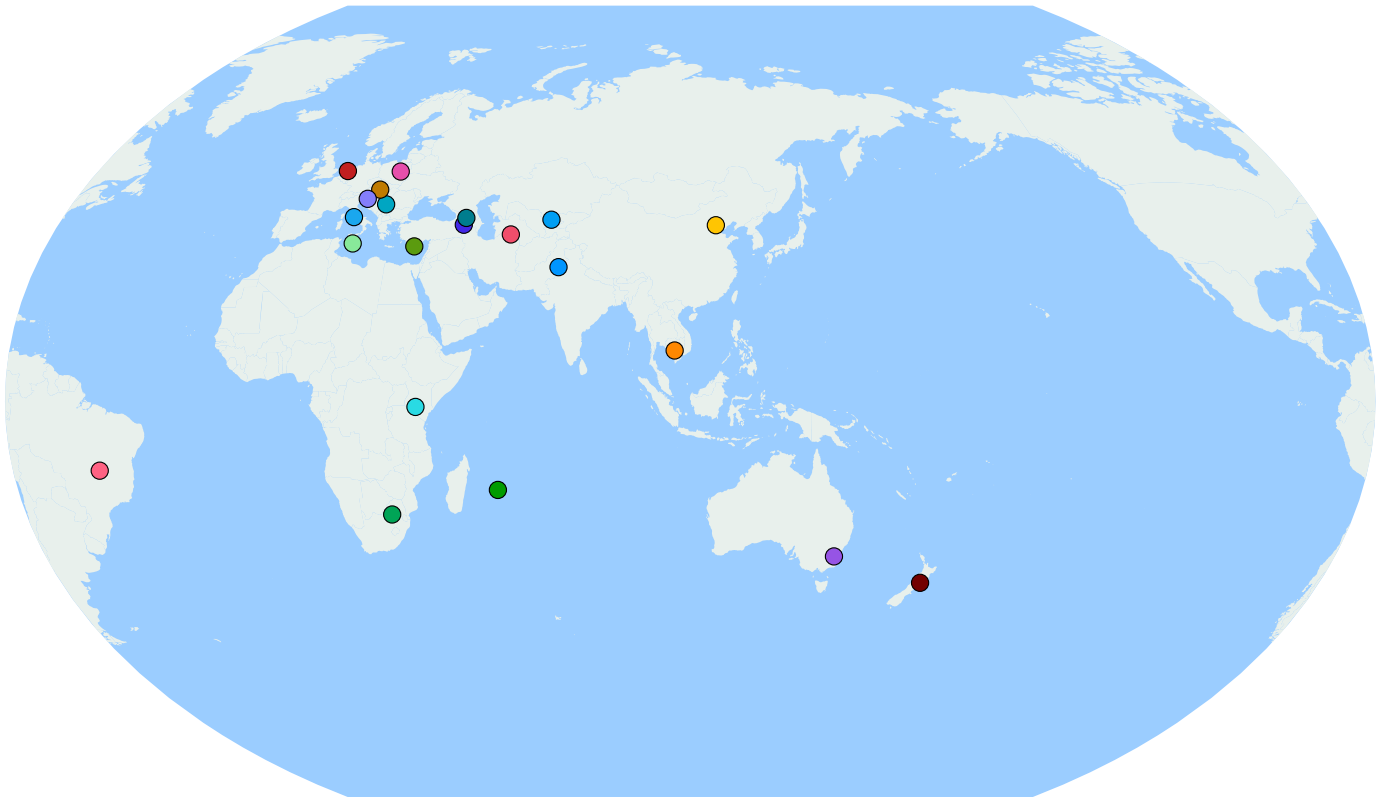
5 Heads of Divisions here refer to MEA officials at the following levels: External Affairs Minister, Ministers of State, Foreign Secretary, Additional Secretary, and Joint Secretary.

6 ‘Missions abroad’ include Embassies, High Commissions, Consulate Generals, Acting Heads (where applicable) and Permanent Representation at Multilateral Forums as of July 2024. Data sourced from MEA website, (<https://www.mea.gov.in/indian-mission-abroad.htm>) and cross-referenced with relevant Embassy websites.

7 The Total Number of missions abroad - Currently the MEA on the ‘About’ page of its website notes [193](#) Indian missions and posts abroad. However a response from Ex- MoS for the MEA V. Murleedharan in the Rajya Sabha notes [202](#) active Indian diplomatic missions and posts across the world as of March 2022, which was corroborated by a senior level serving official within the MEA and has been considered in this report.

Missions headed by women

- Armenia ● Australia ● Brazil ● Cambodia ● China ● Georgia ● Italy ● Kenya
- Malta ● Mauritius ● Netherlands ● New Zealand ● Pakistan ● Palestine
- Poland ● Serbia ● Slovak Republic ● Slovenia ● South Africa ● Turkmenistan
- Uzbekistan



Vacant posts in missions abroad

13 (Cameroon, Congo [Democratic Republic], Iceland, Jamaica, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Suriname, UN-PMI [New York], Yemen)

In a recent podcast episode with Kubernein Initiative, former Ambassador Lakshmi Puri reflected on India's gender equality trajectory, stating that "women's participation in the freedom movement itself really gave an accelerated avenue for women to join public life, to come forward, to get education. And that also was accompanied by social reform". Ambassador Puri also reflected on her journey within the Indian Foreign Services, saying, "We have made some progress since I joined several decades ago. I joined in 1974 and for many years, we (women) were just 5 per cent of the total foreign policy personnel."

EAM Jaishankar's remarks indicate an awareness of the value that diverse viewpoints bring to diplomatic and international relations. Ambassador Puri's reflections provide a historical context, illustrating the progress made over decades, while highlighting that there are still challenges to achieving higher representation at senior levels, though with the new batch reaching near parity for several years, the top leadership is likely to look different within a decade. This dual perspective highlights both the strides made and the ongoing need for systemic changes to ensure gender balance in Indian foreign policy, and to reflect women's interests.

"Reflecting women's interests" in foreign policy means fundamentally going beyond representation and looking at rights and resources dimensions. Gender equality in India's foreign policy engagements have been strongly observed in India's development programmes and projects. In particular, India's [ITEC programme](#) runs many activities solely focusing on women and gender equality. Notable amongst these is the [Solar Mamas](#) project, which provides training and capacity building to non-literate women in areas like the installation of fixed solar systems in individual houses, on how to fabricate sophisticated charge controllers, invertors, LED solar lanterns and how to create rural electronic workshops (REWs).

In the last few years, other than its domestic initiatives, India has been [advancing](#) the concept of 'Women-Led Development' through engagements such as in the Women 20 (W20). At an international level, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his remarks at the Bali G20 summit in November 2022 [said](#): "Global development is not possible without women's participation. We have to maintain priority on women-led development even in our G-20 agenda."

India's position was further articulated by him in his [address](#) to the G20 Ministerial Conference on Women Empowerment in 2023 where he highlighted the point that India saw women as crucial stakeholders in economic empowerment, which fostered inclusivity, fuelled growth and drove global progress. The [shift](#) to a women-led development approach lays an emphasis on not seeing women merely as recipients of welfare and development

programmes but as essential stakeholders and drivers of development initiatives. A new Working Group on Empowerment of Women to support the G20 Women's Ministerial Conference was also [announced](#) during India's G20.

While these examples point out the fact that greater gender mainstreaming efforts exist in certain areas, India's development projects as a whole remain largely demand-driven. Typically, India's development strategies have been reactive to external demands, but there is a gradual shift in how development is conceptualised, moving to more participatory and collaborative approaches. India today has the opportunity to proactively integrate gender and inclusivity concerns on its own terms, even when a particular project or development assistance plan is based on demand from the recipient country.

However, India continues to remain a country without a public development policy/ white paper that outlines how gender and an inclusive lens are being applied to India's ongoing development projects and initiatives. The creation of such a document could provide a structured framework for integrating gender and inclusivity into its development agenda, based on past experiences and learning, as well as on our proactive push for inclusivity in multilateral systems and global engagements.

Inclusivity in action in Indian foreign policy

Recognising our history and trajectory of incorporating gender into both domestic and foreign policy, we delve into areas where gender mainstreaming can be strengthened, focusing on sub-domains relevant to India's external engagements and promoting inclusive policies. These topics – peace and security, climate, trade, and digitalisation – are important areas of global discourse, and directly impact global stability, economic growth, and technological advancement. Addressing gender within these areas ensures a more inclusive and equitable approach that India is well-positioned to champion.

Peace, security and multilateralism

Peace and security is an area that has a very important gender impact which was recognised first by the Security Council in its resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) that outlines the Women, Peace and Security agenda ([WPS](#)). Progress and full implementation of the WPS agenda, as the 2023 UN [report](#) observes, is far from reality. Although India [does not](#) have a WPS National Action Plan (NAP), and is unlikely to develop one in the coming years, peace and security has been an area where India has led active gender mainstreaming efforts:

In [2007](#), India became the first nation to deploy an all-women Formed Police Unit (FPU) to Liberia. This contingent operated until 2015, successfully meeting its objectives and [inspiring](#) local women to join the police force. Following the arrival of the Indian unit, the [number](#) of female applicants to the Liberian police force tripled, increasing from 120 to 350 in just two months.

In the following decade in 2019, India sent a 22-member [female engagement team](#) to the UN Mission MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Most recently, Major Radhika Sen, a part of this engagement team and an Indian military peacekeeper, was [awarded](#) the 2023 United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award.

In January 2023, India also sent its largest [platoon of women peacekeepers](#) to Abyei, South Sudan.

Whilst these examples show India's current and historical contributions to the WPS agenda, the [scope](#) for India to improve the implementation of the WPS agenda continues

to remain. As per [government data](#) in 2019, representation in India's defence forces was at a low level with women in the army at around 4 per cent, in the navy at around 6 per cent, the air force at 13.09 per cent. This has been recognised as a focus area in the last few years and has seen [positive change](#) over the years. In 2020, India's Supreme Court in a [judgement](#) ruled that women army officers were eligible for permanent commission. In the years since, women have also been [inducted](#) as Agniveers and the induction of women officers in command of units in the three services has begun. As per [government data](#) in August 2023, there has been an increase of women in the armed forces with numbers for the three services standing at 1,833 in the Indian Army, 1,809 in the Indian Air Force and 1,306 in the Indian Navy. Besides, a total of 6,466 women are in the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) across the three services.

Despite such progress, gender imbalance in India's defence forces remains a challenge. Integrating WPS principles both internally and externally is crucial for trust-building and effective peacekeeping, promoting long-term stability and peace. Continued commitment to these principles will bolster India's global peace and security contributions. Like many other countries, India can still be a significant WPS actor without a formal National Action Plan (NAP), leveraging its initiatives to drive substantial impact.

Climate and energy

Research shows globally women are [disproportionately](#) affected by climate change, which is also acknowledged in the New Delhi Declaration of the G20. From natural disasters like [tsunamis](#) leading to increased fatalities of women to [increased](#) gender-based violence and the [socio-economic impact](#) of climate change, women remain a vulnerable group. India is [amongst](#) the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, and has globally been a proactive player at the level of UNFCCC. In India's National Action Plan on Climate Change ([NAPCC](#)), the gendered impact of climate change on women and the need to pay attention to gender has been recognised and acknowledged. India has demonstrated climate leadership within the Global South, by championing initiatives like the [International Solar Alliance](#) and committing to ambitious renewable energy targets. Integrating women into these efforts is essential, as their participation and leadership in climate action can drive more effective and inclusive solutions, enhancing climate resilience and sustainability at both local and global levels.

However, the scope for greater promotion of women in India's climate policy remains wide. Even with a national-level articulation of a position on gender and climate change, a study of State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC) reveals a [clear gap](#) in the level of integration of gender perspective in state-level policies. With [only](#) 16 out of 28 SAPCCs mentioning gender but to varying degrees and framing, certain states like [Bihar](#), [Chhattisgarh](#), [Gujarat](#), [Uttarakhand](#) and [Maharashtra](#) have laid a clear emphasis on integrating

gender in their state climate policies. An example of gender integration in practice includes initiatives such as the [Mahila Housing Trust's](#) women-led heat management programmes in informal settlements in Ahmedabad. By painting the roof with reflective paint, the indoor temperature reduced, allowing women to live and work comfortably indoors. These small but impactful changes have enhanced community resilience to extreme heat, reducing long-term adverse effects to women's health.

An area of climate policy where there has been a gender focus in the last few years is women in renewable energy (RE). The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has [outlined](#) the [importance](#) of promoting women in the area of RE; in this regard there are [examples of projects like Project SURYA, programmes like Women Climate Champions, and Clean Cooking programme](#) initiated by Indian companies like [ReNew](#) with other stakeholders like UNEP, Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), IIT Delhi, and UNDP. Across India, civil society organisations (CSOs) are also actively involved in the climate space, some of which include organisations like [Mahila Housing Trust](#), [Industree](#), [Swayam Shikshan Prayog](#) and many others. The challenge for India, as a [2022 PwC report](#) states, is to integrate gender in India's climate policy systematically, which has a sustained focus on funding, skilling and mentorship, integrated gender policies, and technology, knowledge building and sharing and above all – scale.

Trade

Like many other domains, International Trade and Gender is an area where Indian policy is more [unstructured in nature](#) but one that is evolving and maturing. As we find, India's latest Foreign Trade Policy ([2023](#)) released by the Ministry of Commerce [does not](#) have any particular mention of gender. However, in a subset area of trade policy like trade facilitation, under the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan ([NTFAP](#)) 2020-2023, the need to address gender in trade has been recognised under Action Point 27: "Promote gender inclusiveness in trade", setting out objectives and actions points. The improvement of India's score on "[Women in trade facilitation](#)", measured as a part of a multiple joint UN bodies biennial survey also highlights India's proactive approach to implementing great gender-inclusive trade policies. India's score in the Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for [2023](#), for women in trade facilitation stood at 77.78 per cent, which is an increase from a score of 66.67 per cent in [2021](#) due to greater implementation of these measures. This score represents the extent to which trade facilitation measures incorporate gender considerations to support women in trade. The [improvement](#) is attributed to specific actions such as targeted training programmes for women entrepreneurs, establishment of gender-responsive trade policies, and creation of digital platforms that facilitate easier access to trade information and resources for women.

In recent years, India has been much more open to negotiating chapters on gender, labour standards, environmental and sustainable development theme-oriented provisions in the Free Trade Agreements (FTA). Illustrating this point, the recently concluded European

Free Trade Association (EFTA)-India Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement ([TEPA](#)), signed by the EFTA member states (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland) and India in March 2024, contains provisions on the above-mentioned themes including gender. Article 11.3: Promoting Environmentally Sustainable and Inclusive Growth contains two provisions for gender equality and inclusion namely Clause (2) and (3) of Article 11.3 of the [TEPA](#).

India's approach to trade and gender is still unstructured, and lacks a formalised framework or set of guidelines specifically addressing the integration of gender considerations into trade policies. However, its current trajectory indicates a shift towards gender-responsiveness in trade policies. Continued efforts to integrate gender considerations will contribute to women's socio-economic empowerment. This shift ensures that the benefits of trade are equitably distributed, fostering a more inclusive economic growth model.

Digitalisation, digital inclusion

Digitalisation and the digital economy have been an emerging area where India has been taking the lead in the promotion of digital public infrastructure. Beyond financial inclusion, India has also been focusing on creating a set of open Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) – the India Stack model, which has created an ecosystem of government and private sector innovation setting up digital public infrastructure. One of the noteworthy examples from India is the [Unified Payments Interface \(UPI\)](#), which has had remarkable success in implementation [with](#) over 300 million users and over 50 million merchants. The UPI platform has become extremely popular in India, with over [9.41 billion](#) transactions totalling approximately Rs.14.89 trillion conducted in May 2023 alone. There is a concerted effort to make these digital platforms more gender-inclusive. For example, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has [partnered](#) with the Women's World Banking to take on board the next 200 million low-income women in rural and semi-urban areas who possess both bank accounts and mobile phones. India is holding detailed discussions and signing MoUs with other Global South countries to adapt these systems to other nations.

Another notable example is the '[Jan Dhan Plus](#)' programme, which has been particularly successful in promoting financial inclusion among women. Piloted with the Bank of Baroda in both urban and rural areas, the programme has reached over 12 million women customers as of April 2023. By encouraging women to save small amounts, the programme has seen a significant increase in the average balances of these accounts, contributing to greater financial resilience.

When it comes to dimensions of digital inclusion such as privacy, safety etc, in India there is an attempt to create and incorporate principles in frameworks and laws governing

digital ecosystems. Some of the laws and frameworks focusing on these include [Draft DEPA Framework that was released in 2020](#), ["THE DIGITAL PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION ACT, 2023"](#), [National Digital Communications Policy 2018](#), and [NATIONAL DATA GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK POLICY MAY 2022 \(DRAFT\) 2022](#). These laws and frameworks address gender issues and impact digital inclusion by promoting data empowerment and protection, ensuring privacy and security for women (Draft DEPA Framework), and providing robust data protection measures (Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023). They also aim to bridge the digital divide with universal broadband connectivity (National Digital Communications Policy 2018) and promote equitable access to data for women and marginalised groups (National Data Governance Framework Policy).

While India has been successful in introducing a DPI ecosystem, much remains to be done to successfully address the digital gender divide. South Asia, for instance, has amongst the [highest gender gaps](#) in mobile ownership at 15 per cent. In India, a [2024 report](#) from GSMA estimates the gender gap for mobile ownership and mobile internet adoption stood at 75 per cent and 37 per cent for women as compared to 85 per cent and 53 per cent for men respectively, though the gap has narrowed compared to previous years. A trend also found in [ICRIER's 2024 report](#) on India's Digital Economy underscores the point for India to continue working on addressing this gap.

Conclusion

As India navigates its journey towards integrating feminist principles into its foreign policy, the steps taken so far reflect a promising trajectory. By addressing key areas such as peace and security, climate policy, trade, and digitalisation, India is laying the groundwork driven by many of its own experiences and reflecting the demand for quality development partnerships from other countries. The initiatives discussed here and many others not only underscore the transformative power of inclusive policies and their long term impact, but also serve to pinpoint where gaps lie and how they can be addressed. Oftentimes we know that greater gender mainstreaming is the need, but where and how become the challenge, especially in countries that look vastly different from ours. By recognising the complexities of our partnerships and responding to demand, by embracing feminist principles, although in a more ad hoc manner, India is addressing disparities to create pathways for a more equitable and just society. The pathways might look different from countries that have defined a FFP or those that are considered greater gender champions, but the ultimate goals remain the same. While a challenge remains in maintaining momentum, stronger integration and sustained financial abilities, this demonstrated commitment to inclusivity has the potential to redefine India's role on the global stage.

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