

International Cooperation Partnership Policy

The purpose of this policy is to define principles for Frieda, its staff and partners that should guide both sides in their role as partners. It is the understanding of Frieda as a Northern NGO and donor that partnership is not a neutral concept, but a reflection of (global) power structures, hierarchies, dependencies, and obligations. This partnership policy serves to organise partnerships in a way that shall make them fruitful for all stakeholders by recognising the sources of power and power dynamics in Frieda's partnerships and to address power imbalances in a meaningful way.¹ This policy acts as a position paper and makes public our stance on partnership by outlining the most relevant principles of our work.

Partnering with Frieda

Frieda is a politically and denominationally independent non-governmental feminist peace organisation working towards a world in which all people can live in dignity, peace, security and free from violence. Frieda works with a broad, positive concept of peace that encompasses all forms of violence, exclusion, and discrimination. Peace means not only the absence of war or physical violence, but also equality and justice for all people regardless of their (biological and social) gender, sexual orientation, origin, social status, political or religious beliefs. Frieda's work presupposes the analysis of gender-specific structural discrimination and places therefore emphasis on achieving equal rights and equality for women and girls. Frieda promotes empowerment as a process and aims at self-determined empowerment on an individual, collective and societal level.

As a feminist organisation striving for gender justice through its programmes in Switzerland and abroad, Frieda sees itself not just as a donor, but as an ally to its partners. To achieve gender justice, Frieda works mainly with civil society organisations in a participatory, resource- and needs-based and conflict sensitive manner.

Building on existing resources and initiatives is a critical foundation for sustainability. Frieda aims to continually improve its work and its relationships with its partners. Willingness for continual development and critical reflection are key elements for a successful partnership.

Frieda is committed to six partnership principles:

1. Equal partnership and mutuality
2. Shared vision and goal
3. Transparency and accountability
4. Local ownership
5. Learning and organisational development
6. Enhancing networks

¹ This partnership policy has been established in 2021 in a participatory way with Frieda's partner organisations in the Middle East, Maghreb and South-East Europe. It is inspired by the partnership policy of Kvinna till Kvinna.

The six partnership principles²

1. Equal partnership and mutuality

Mutual trust and respect form important cornerstones of the partnership. Frieda commits to be an involved, supportive, engaged, solidary and caring partner. Frieda is also convinced that a successful partnership is based on clearly defined roles and responsibilities, which are respected on both sides.

Because of its dual role as a partner and a donor, Frieda assumes responsibility to critically reflect the power imbalances and hierarchies inherent in the field of international cooperation. Frieda strives for an equitable partnership and explores ways to actively manage and address problematic power imbalances. However, both, Frieda and partner organisations, are part of a system with sometimes predefined roles and external expectations. The renegotiation of roles and responsibilities between partner organisations and Frieda should be informed by mutual benefits and the goal of bringing sustainable change for the respective communities. Frieda sees its partners as equal stakeholders, who have to fulfil roles and responsibilities towards local authorities, civil society and their project participants.

Frieda uses its position as a well-established NGO in Switzerland with its partners' and participants' needs in mind. Frieda aims at being an accessible partner, who works flexibly and tries to minimize bureaucracy. Frieda serves as a bridge between foreign support and local needs.

The ultimate goal of the cooperation between Frieda and its partner organisations is to benefit the project participants and local civil society.

2. Shared vision and goal

Frieda aims at achieving gender justice and peace, applying a gender-transformative approach and conflict-sensitive programme management. Central to Frieda's work are the universal human rights principles, the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW), as well as the 2030 agenda for sustainable development with particular focus on the SDGs 5 and 16+. Frieda's partnerships are anchored in the commitment to these international agreements.

Partnering with Frieda is about pursuing a global vision that is locally implemented in three sectors: sexual and gender-based violence, economic empowerment, and social and political participation. Programs and strategies implemented together with our partners are rooted in the particularity of local contexts, laws and politics, promoting local solutions for local challenges. The engagement of men at project and staff level is considered imperative to bring about societal transformation.

3. Transparency and accountability

² Frieda has developed its partnership policy based on multiple discussion panels together with its partner organisations in all regions over the period of three months in 2020-2021. Participation in this process has not been mandatory for the partners.

The rights and obligations of the partnership are unambiguous: the partnership takes place in a formal framework through a partnership agreement, in which all relevant aspects concerning the strategy, the working methodologies and financial processes are determined. Frieda communicates its expectations precisely. The selection criteria for a partnership with Frieda are coherent and comprehensible. When looking for a new partnership, Frieda publishes calls for proposals and discloses the selection criteria. Frieda aims at a fair and responsible phasing-out process and accompanies its partners within its possibilities in the process.

Pro-active and nuanced communication are central to guarantee transparency in partnerships. Frequent exchange between Frieda and its partners is essential and considered to be a crucial tool to assess the health of the partnership. Frieda encourages an open feedback culture and aims to be a predictable, reliable, and trustworthy partner. Frieda adheres to a zero-tolerance approach when it comes to bribery and corruption. Frieda expects the same of its partners. Frieda is accountable to its partner organisations and back donors and morally accountable to the project participants. Frieda's partners are equally accountable towards all of their stakeholders, including project participants.

4. Local ownership

Frieda believes that local ownership is key to effective and sustainable change. Each partner is an expert on their own context and Frieda recognizes their expertise, history and prior experience. Thus, partners need to define their own challenges and risks and set their own agendas together with the communities they work with. As a partner, Frieda has an advisory role, contributing with its own experience and expertise to project design and implementation. Projects are rights-based and developed according to the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups. Frieda expects partner organisations to work in a participatory way by including the respective communities and right holders in the design and implementation of their projects. New and/or additional needs may arise during the implementation of a project. Frieda supports and advises its partners to meet them within a jointly agreed framework.

5. Learning and organisational development

Frieda acknowledges that both, partner organisations and Frieda, are learning organisations and should hence be committed to capacity strengthening. Mutual learning is at the core of the partnership and the willingness for continual development on the organisational level is central. Frieda and its partners reflect on their shared experience and support each other in adapting to changing requirements and contexts. Frieda encourages reflections on how the partnership between Frieda and its partners evolves over time.

Frieda, in its role as donor and partner, supports the strategic and organisational strengthening of its partner organisations. Frieda commits to enabling spaces for learning and exchange and supports its partners to set their own priorities along their organisational journey. Frieda commits to continuously integrating the lessons learnt, knowledge and experience from partners and Northern and Southern networks into its own organisational and strategic program development. Program review processes and evaluations are part of institutional learning. Frieda supports and facilitates these processes. However, the interest in the learning of the partner organisations is prioritized over donor-driven requirements. Frieda critically reflects on concepts of efficiency and

impact, and values processes of self-evaluation and participatory methodologies including project participants. Frieda promotes upward and downward accountability, for example through the regular assessment of Frieda's quality of cooperation through partners.

The conducting of gender analysis that reflect the immediate environment of project participants with a focus on gender inequalities, is one of Frieda's key instruments to enable a qualitative in-depth assessment and critical reflection on the programs. The analysis is one of the tools for Frieda and partner organisations to jointly learn and understand how programs can make the biggest impact and address the most immediate needs of project participants.

6. Enhancing networks

Networks, whether at international, national or regional level, are important for achieving long-term goals and working towards systemic change. They provide opportunities to learn from each other and help to create synergies in a community of practice. Frieda values, supports, and proactively facilitates collaboration and exchange between its partners and other relevant networks.