

# CONCORD Europe Analysis of GAPIII

## Presented to CODEV, 26 November 2020

2020 should have been a celebratory year for accelerating gender equality globally. Instead, Covid-19 has dramatically reversed the progress made over recent decades. Inequalities, poverty and gender-based violence are on the rise and women and girls are the first to be impacted. **Gender equality is one of the EU's key values and principles and, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has never been more important that the EU remains true to its commitments.** We welcome the new Gender Action Plan (GAPIII) and acknowledge that it takes especially important steps forward in terms of tackling the root causes of gender inequalities. However, for GAPIII to be a success, other, complementary steps are needed. Here, Member States play a very important role. CONCORD Europe will focus on three key factors that can make GAPIII more impactful: implementation, funding and the inclusion of civil society.

### 1. GAPIII implementation: programming and mainstreaming

- CONCORD proposes that the EU Gender Action Plan should be the basis for every new gender strategy developed by an EU Member State, ensuring alignment and better accountability. **We call on Member States to endorse the new GAPIII in their Council Conclusions and to commit to the full implementation of GAPIII in their external action**, so as to ensure alignment and better impact in partner countries.
- We welcome the GAPIII **focus on implementation and impact**, in particular at country level. **Funding is absolutely crucial** for achieving the GAPIII objectives and having an impact on women's and girls' lives worldwide. Funding to gender equality can only be effectively allocated through the **EU programming process**, including joint programming: **EU Delegations and Member States' Embassies therefore have a key role in prioritising funding for gender equality in the programming process.** This is an important requirement to make GAPIII successful.
- However, funding through development assistance is not enough: **women's and girls' rights will not be achieved if policies that structurally hamper their realisation are not changed.** In that regard, we welcome the references to the need to assess the impact of trade agreements on women's rights and the commitment to look at the gender responsiveness of public expenditure and financial accountability (PEFA). On the other hand, **we regret the lack of indicators to be able to track progress in how well gender is mainstreamed in non-development policies such as trade and agriculture.**
- While GAPIII mentions the continuation of the 3-pronged approach and support to gender equality at national level, GAPIII does not make explicit how gender will be included in dialogues at partner country level, by EU Delegations and Member State Embassies. **We call on Member States to ensure that GAPIII leads to a more systematic inclusion of gender equality and women's and girls' rights in political dialogue with partner countries**, including human rights dialogues and social dialogues, **but also in technical dialogues where gender analysis and messaging is less commonly used.** Key areas include trade, security, agriculture, energy and digitalisation dialogues. In that sense, we believe the indicator on political dialogue

in the Staff Working Document is far from ambitious enough as it suggests including gender in only one dialogue per year per country.

- The GAPIII endorses the Gender Equality Strategy's language regarding "women in all their diversity". This is very positive, but this inclusive language is not streamlined throughout the whole document (e.g. it is absent from the section on SRHR and promotion of participation and leadership). **It is not clear how this more inclusive understanding of gender will shape the implementation of the GAPIII**, and how the GAPIII will reach women in all their diversity. This is because **the section on intersectionality is not comprehensive in terms of grounds of discrimination**. General Recommendation No. 28 on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) includes other categories (it reads: the discrimination of women based on sex and gender is inextricably linked with other factors that affect women, such as race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health, status, age, class, caste and sexual orientation and gender identity). This full list would be more aligned with GAPIII's stated objectives to address the needs of women in all their diversity and focus on marginalized groups. It would also include the age factor and pave the way for measures that are age-appropriate and respond to the needs of young as well as elderly people.
- While we welcome the European Commission's commitment to report on the GAPIII, we would like to see more details on how Member States will report meaningfully on their action contributing to the GAPIII. **We ask Member States to commit in their Council Conclusions to ensure high quality reporting and to make their reporting on the GAPIII public, for accountability reasons.**

## 2. Time for the EU to set funding targets on gender equality

- CONCORD welcomes the fact that, in the new Action Plan, the EU will still have to give robust reasons, based on the findings of the gender analysis, to substantiate any action deemed not to contribute to gender equality. **We call on Member States to endorse this commitment and to make sure they duly justify the use of the GO marker for each project.**
- We welcome the EU recommitment to ensuring that at least 85% of all new EU external actions will have gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment as a significant or a principal objective by 2025. This target should be achieved by all EU stakeholders involved in external actions, which include DG DEVCO, but also DG NEAR, DG ECHO, the EEAS and EU Member States, as well as the EBRD and the EIB when operating in partner countries. **We therefore call on Member States to recommit to this target in their Council Conclusions.**
- **However, we consider it a missed opportunity that the 85% target is not referring to the share of ODA.** We know that SDG5 is one of the three least financed SDGs globally. Having a funding target, rather than a target based on the number of actions, would give a better picture of the share of EU funding contributing to gender equality and SDG5. This would also be more aligned with OECD DAC gender marker reporting.
- The European Commission's proposal to have **at least one G2 project in each EU partner country and region** is interesting. Nonetheless, it remains unclear how this would actually lead to significantly greater *targeted* funding for gender equality.

Therefore, **we suggest that this should come as a complement to a funding target of 20% of ODA** directly addressing the root causes of gender inequalities and having gender equality as a principal objective (G2).

- The **quality of marking projects** is also crucial. A study from Oxfam has shown that a majority of projects marked G1 or G2 according to the OECD-DAC gender marker has not been evaluated properly and should not have been marked as meaningfully contributing to gender equality. **We therefore urge Member States to improve the quality of their and the European Commission's project design as well as reporting on the gender markers.**

### **3. A meaningful involvement of local civil society organisations working on gender equality**

- We welcome the emphasis put in the GAPIII on the **role of local CSOs**. We believe it is of utmost importance that local CSOs, especially organisations working on women's and girls' rights, are involved and consulted in the implementation of the GAPIII. They have extensive experience and reach in delivering services to communities and to those who are often excluded from public health interventions. They also represent the voice of these communities in decision-making processes as well as advocating for women's and girls' rights. A key observation from the implementation of GAPII was that consultation with local women's rights organisations was often done too late in the process when priorities at the country level had already been set. GAPIII highlights the importance for Member States to commit to a dialogue with local CSOs and we therefore **call on Member States to recognise civil society's role in their Council Conclusions and to commit to involving CSOs in the implementation of GAPIII**. Dialogue with CSOs, especially local civil organisations working on women's and girls' rights, should be continuous and not organised only as consultations for the programming process or planning for the GAPIII implementation.
- Beyond broader funding targets for gender equality and CSO consultations, it will also be important to **ensure significantly increased funding for local women's rights CSOs**.

### **4. Thematics**

#### Positive aspects:

- **Agriculture, food and land and natural resources rights** are much better addressed than in GAPII, and this is all the more important now that COVID19 has further exacerbated hunger and malnutrition, and given the lack of investment in the agroecological transition.
- **Unpaid care work** is not only recognised as a barrier to women's decent work, but GAPIII includes concrete commitments to address it and contribute to redistributing it. The importance of universal social protection and public health services is expressly acknowledged.
- We welcome the section on **education**, which is quite strong. We emphasise that in order for education to be fully inclusive, the principle of intersectionality will need to be applied in order to identify and address the barriers faced by certain groups (e.g.

on the basis of disability, ethnic or social origin, etc. but also discrimination against pregnant teenagers).

- **Climate, biodiversity and environmental protection** are more prominent in GAPIII than in GAPII. It is positive that the **climate** is identified as a key area to work on as the gender dimensions of climate change need to be acknowledged and addressed. The GAPIII, to a certain extent, rectifies the fact that the European Green Deal is gender blind. There are very important elements in the GAPIII (e.g. promoting women's and girls' participation in the development of climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, including women smallholder farmers, and supporting women's entrepreneurship in the green economy). But, **in the section on promoting gender mainstreaming in all areas of EU external action (chapter 1.2) there is no clear reference to EU climate policies or the European Green Deal.** We also would like to see an explicit recognition of the important work of female environmental defenders, as they need support and protection. The EU should proactively advocate and walk the talk to ensure that local CSOs working on gender equality can access international, European and national climate funds. In that vein, the UNFCCC Lima work programme and its Gender Action Plan 2020-2025 should have been referenced, as it contains concrete ways on how to advance a gendered climate agenda. The UNFCCC Gender Action Plan in particular aims at actions to promote the "participation of grassroots, local and indigenous women" in climate policies, to "raise awareness of the financial and technical support available for promoting the strengthening of gender integration into climate policies (..), including good practices, to facilitate access to climate finance for grass-roots women's organizations and indigenous peoples and local communities" and to exchange expertise on the "integration of gender-responsive budgeting into national budgets".
- We welcome the fact that further actions **on the Spotlight Initiative** will depend on an evaluation of whether the stated transformative approach of the programme had the desired impact or not.

#### Less positive aspects

- While there are references to the need for the **EIP** to pay more attention to women entrepreneurs and ensure gender mainstreaming, we would have wished **for a far more robust commitment to ensure that all private sector instruments**, including those managed by the EIB and other European development finance institutions, need to align with the commitments of GAPIII and also be at least gender-responsive.
- We are also disappointed that GAPIII does not include a single reference to the need to scale up efforts for **domestic resources mobilisation** - which is the only sustainable way for partner countries to fund women's rights in the long term. There is no reference either to the need to scale up efforts to address illicit financial flows and tax avoidance by large companies, including European companies, which adversely impact the capacity of developing countries to invest in gender-responsive public services. Lastly, there are no references to the impact of austerity and fiscal orthodoxy on women's rights and inequality, and the role the EU and its Member States could play in the IMF and World Bank to secure a change in approach.
- GAPIII totally overlooks the imperative to **regulate business enterprises** so that they can be held to account in case of women's and girls' rights violations. GAPIII only refers to cooperation with businesses, which is shocking in light of the universal acknowledgement that voluntary initiatives are not enough. GAPIII is not even

aligned with ongoing regulatory efforts by the European Commission itself on this topic.

- The section on **digitalisation** is mostly positive, hitting the mark on the key issues of access (including in rural areas), affordability, security, fighting stereotypes, inclusive e-services and content creation through digital skills and support to women-led digital entrepreneurship and innovation. However, the section is weaker with regards to online gender-based violence, which is a major barrier to women's and girls' access to, and engagement in, digital spaces. Here, intersectionality plays a major role: girls and women who identify as LGBTIQ+, those from an ethnic minority, and adolescent girls (especially aged 14-16 years old) in particular report higher rates of harassment.

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<b>NATIONAL PLATFORMS</b>	 Global Responsibility Austrian Platform for Development and Humanitarian Aid	 BELGISCH PLATFORM PLATE-FORME BELGE CONCORD CICOD-11.11.11 11.11.11 ACODEV ega-Belgie/ata	 BPID Bulgarian Platform for International Development	 Platforma za međunarodnu građansku solidarnost Hrvatske – Croatian Platform for International Citizens Solidarity CROSOL	 CYINDEP Cyprus Island wide NGO Development Platform	 FORS
 GLOBAL FOCUS Danish CNR for Development Cooperation	 AKÜ	 fingo	 COORDINATION SUD	 VENRO ASSOCIATION OF GERMAN DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN AID NGOs	 Hellenic Platform for Development	 HAND
 Dochas The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations	 Network of NGOs in Europe for the relief of emergency CONCORD ITALIA	 LAPAS WWW.LAPAS.LV	 LITHUANIAN NATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION ORGANISATIONS' PLATFORM LITDEA	 Cercle de coopération des ONGD DU LUXEMBOURG	 SKOP Solidarjeta u Koperazjoni	 PARTOS
 ZAGRANICA	 ONGD PLATAFORMA PORTUGUESA	 FOND Národná Organizácia Neprofitných spoločností vo Švédsku	 Ambrela Platforma for Development Organisations	 SLOGA SLOVENIAN GLOBAL ACTION	 COORDINADORA ESPAÑA	 CONCORD
 bond	<b>NETWORKS</b>	 actalliance eu Formerly APRODEV	 act:onaid	 ADRA	 care	 caritas europa
 cbm together we can do more	 ChildFund Alliance	 CIDSE together for global justice	 eucord European Union Organisations for Relief and Development	 GNDR Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction	 Habitat for Humanity Europe, Middle East and Africa	 humanity & inclusion
 IPPF International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network	 ISLAMIC RELIEF	 LIGHT FOR THE WORLD	 OXFAM International	 PLAN INTERNATIONAL	 Save the Children	 Sightsavers
 solidar	 SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES INTERNATIONAL	 Terre des Hommes International Federation	 wecf	 World Vision	 WWF	<b>ASSOCIATE MEMBERS</b>
 ALDA European Association for Local Democracy	 ea ea EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS	 EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP FOR DEMOCRACY	 NRC NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL			