

# Implementing the EU Gender Action Plan III: Turning ambition into impact?



2023 marks the mid-term point of the implementation of the EU’s Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 (GAP III). GAP III is an ambitious policy, and it is important to monitor the actual impact it is having on the lives of women and girls in all their diversity in the EU’s partner countries, and to readjust the course of its implementation to better respond to their intersectional needs and rights.

**CONCORD’s evaluation report reviews GAP III implementation in three carefully chosen local contexts: Morocco, the Philippines and Kenya, and focuses on how the new and potentially transformative elements of GAP III - a gender-transformative and intersectional approach - have been applied in practice.** The report finds that the level of ambition and impact of GAP III vary from country to country. However, the challenges standing in the way of a more transformative impact are similar across countries and are concentrated within the areas of funding access and meaningful engagement with local women’s rights organisations (WROs), internal expertise and capacity in EU Delegations (EUDs), and gender mainstreaming across all EU external action areas.



## The Philippines: A good example of the EU supporting gender equality

The EUD in the Philippines showcases good practices in its implementation of GAP III, especially in terms of engagement with local civil society organisations (CSOs) using an intersectional approach. The Gender Country Profile and the Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP) were developed through a participatory consultation process involving a diverse set of local WROs. Even after the CLIP consultations, the EUD engages regularly with civil society through a civil society sounding board. The EUD leadership takes gender equality and women’s rights seriously and EU Member State Ambassadors act as gender champions. The EU Gender Focal Persons group has effectively coordinated GAP III efforts and policy dialogues with the Philippine government, raising the EU’s profile and influence in gender equality and women’s empowerment.



## Building meaningful engagement with CSOs in Morocco: A long way to go

The implementation of GAP III in Morocco faces several challenges. While the EUD in Morocco has a gender group coordinating efforts by the EU and Member States on GAP III and policy dialogue with the Moroccan government, the fact that the Gender Country Profile and CLIP are not publicly available hinders CSOs’ ability to monitor the implementation of GAP III. Local WROs, including those in the capital, are often unaware of GAP III, and there has been a lack of feedback to organisations that invest time and resources participating in consultations. Whereas local WROs have identified the implementation of international conventions, legal reforms, and individual freedoms as priority issues, the EU’s focus on women’s economic empowerment is seen as a way to circumvent more controversial human rights issues. The ‘new’ principles of GAP III – the gender transformative approach and intersectionality – have yet to be understood and widely applied by EUD staff.



## Kenya: Room for improvement in mainstreaming gender across all EU external action

While efforts were made to include a diverse group of local WROs in the consultation process for developing the CLIP, structured engagement between the EU Delegation and CSOs, especially those representing marginalised groups, such as LGBTIQ communities and persons with disabilities, is not yet fully established. Complex EU funding mechanisms pose challenges for local WROs, with limited accessibility and short-term cycles hindering long-term gender-transformative approaches. GAP III is used as a reference document guiding EU international cooperation, as opposed to the wider EU-Kenya partnership including trade and sectors of significant investment and impact such as renewable energy. The study specifically found a lack of mainstreaming gender and GAP III principles in green transition initiatives.

# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS



## High-level political support, adequate human resources and training for gender equality are needed everywhere

- **Ensure high-level political support and adequate resources for gender equality** by involving high-level management at EU headquarters, EUDs, and Member State Embassies.
- **Assign sufficient financial and human resources to EUD Gender Focal Points**, making gender equality a priority rather than an add-on. Clearly define Gender Focal Points' responsibilities, reporting lines, and decision-making power. Invest in building in-house expertise through training on gender mainstreaming, international human rights frameworks, and the GAP III core principles of gender-transformative, human rights-based and intersectional approaches.



## Implement the core principles of GAP III - a gender transformative, intersectional, and human rights-based approach - in practice

- **Develop guidelines for EUDs to adopt an intersectional, gender-transformative approach**, outlining a comprehensive strategy for incorporating intersectionality at all stages of GAP III implementation, including consultations, gender analysis, calls for proposals, project evaluation, funding allocation, and political dialogue with partner countries.
- **Ensure the proper application of a human rights-based approach throughout GAP III implementation and monitoring**, providing staff in HQ and EUDs with the necessary knowledge and support.



## Ensure ambitious and quality funding for GAP III

- **Carefully assess the quality of gender equality actions and adhere to OECD-DAC criteria** when assigning the G1 and G2 markers.
- **Commit to funding targets, with 85% of ODA allocated to programmes with significant gender equality components (G1/G2) and 20% of ODA dedicated to programmes with gender equality as a principal component.**
- **Allocate more funding to gender-targeted (G2) actions** to bring about meaningful changes in the lives of women and girls in all their diversity.



## Increase direct, core, flexible and long-term funding to local women's rights organisations

- Propose **new funding programmes and/or grant schemes that directly fund** core activities of **local women's rights organisations, feminist movements** and organisations representing people experiencing intersectional discrimination such as **persons with disabilities and LGBTIQ communities**, enabling them to assume full leadership and power.
- **Ensure that INGOs and local women's rights organisations do not have to compete** with each other for the same funding pot by establishing separate funding streams.



## Ensure meaningful, safe and inclusive dialogue with local women's rights organisations

- **EU Delegations should reach out to and engage with a wide variety of local CSOs and WROs throughout all stages** of the GAP III implementation and monitoring cycle, using an inclusive, accessible and intersectional approach.
- **Promote transparency, accessibility, and inclusivity** by granting access to Country Level Implementation Plans and Gender Country Profiles to all civil society stakeholders. Consulted CSOs should receive feedback and follow-up on their recommendations in accessible ways.



## Take gender mainstreaming seriously across all EU external action

- **Apply GAP III commitments comprehensively across all areas of EU foreign and security policy**, including at the country level. This includes addressing gender issues in political dialogues with partner governments. EUDs should not limit their focus to non-sensitive gender equality issues but also support human rights, including women's rights, LGBTIQ rights, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- **Promote gender mainstreaming in sectors of significant investment and impact**, such digitalisation, the green transition and infrastructure.



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