

# CONCORD analysis and recommendations

## Gender Action Plan report 2016

September 2017

### Introduction

CONCORD welcomes the European Commission's 2016 Implementation Report of the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP), which provides a comprehensive and detailed overview of progress made for each actor reporting on the GAP, as well as the remaining gaps.

The report demonstrates a clear momentum and kickstart to the implementation of EU GAP II, in particular in DG DEVCO and NEAR, with significantly increased attention to gender analyses and resourcing and significant effort to ensure gender mainstreaming in development funding. In addition, a number of EU Delegations (EUDs) and Member States made important progress.

The report also honestly describes the challenges in reporting and implementation, notably in the institutional and cultural shift and monitoring progress on all objectives, as well as in terms of mainstreaming gender into sector policy dialogue, particularly if it is not related to social policies.

Clearly a lot has been accomplished in the very first year of GAP II implementation, though much is still left to be done to ensure all EU actors meet GAP II commitments and to ensure that all key priorities and gender-related SDGs are adequately addressed in the EU's external action.

### Conclusions from the Report, which CONCORD strongly supports:

- *The management should push the drafting and implementation of a gender analysis at EUD/ country-level and ensure this is supported by gender expertise and guidance – without overloading gender focal points, who are responsible for guidance, not for doing all the work.*
- *GAP II is everyone's responsibility – thus it must be included in performance assessments.*
- *Clear instructions should be sent from Capitals and HQ to country level, also to increase coordination and coherence at country level for programming.*
- *Critically review GAP objectives chosen at country and regional level, and shed light on why some are not receiving enough attention. Diversify, do not just focus on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).*
- *Use Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD).*
- *Include gender equality better in quality control processes.*
- *Integrate gender in sectoral trainings.*

## CONCORD's specific feedback on the report and additional recommendations:

### A. Institutional and cultural shift

It is encouraging that 108 EUDs submitted reports, which signals that most EUDs see the importance of focusing on gender equality and reporting on it. It is however discouraging that only 11 EUDs met the compulsory minimum standards. It would be interesting to see which minimum standards most EUDs failed to meet and to know what is being done to remedy that situation. The fact that gender is included in instructions for the mid-term review of MFF programming is certainly a positive indication that more can be expected from EUDs in future.

The GAP seems much more institutionalised and pushed by the top management in DGs **DEVCO** and **NEAR** than in the **EEAS**, where GAP implementation seems more ad-hoc. This is also demonstrated by the lack of reporting by many EEAS departments – and what is reported is weak both in terms of numbers and overall content. More political leadership from High Representative Mogherini and all managers is needed to increase resources, responsiveness and accountability.

**Member States** also present some weaknesses in GAP implementation (with a few exceptions). While 22 Member States reported, there is little alignment with GAP II indicators, other than by Belgium, Finland and Poland. Five Member States did not report at all, and the national reports seem to show inconsistencies in objective selection. However, a breakdown to Member State level is not always given in the report, so it is difficult to track which Member States made most and least progress on the GAP II. At the same time, there are some very encouraging developments reported by some Member States. For instance, we are pleased to note Sweden's reflections on how its feminist foreign and international development policy has affected gender equality work and outcomes.

#### **Recommendations:**

- *It will be important to emphasise that the minimum standards are, unlike other targets, expected to be met from day one.*
- *GAP criteria should be included in management reporting formats, as the EC has done, so all EU actors report and align themselves to implement GAP II*

**Objective 1 - Increased coordination among EU institutions and Member States:** According to the report it is difficult to get an understanding of the substance of **policy dialogues** in partner countries. DG NEAR has, however, provided details on topics, discussions and commitments made during coordination meetings – information which is essential to follow up on commitments.

It also becomes clear that gender equality is not sufficiently included into sector policy dialogue, and that coordination resulting in actual cooperation and burden-sharing only exists in 29 partner countries.

**Coordination with CSOs**, including women's organisations, does not come out as a priority, which is a major lost opportunity and weakness in GAP II implementation.

**Recommendations:**

- *EUDs must provide better information on the topics and outcomes of policy dialogues.*
- *Gender equality must be integrated into sector policy dialogue to a much larger extent.*
- *Collaboration and burden-sharing in more partner countries needs to improve.*
- *Greater efforts need to be made to establish regular dialogue and coordination with CSOs. Women's organisations in particular must be much better involved in dialogue, gender analysis and programming.*

**Objective 2 - Dedicated leadership:** It is very encouraging to see that more Heads of Delegations are actively participating in external events on gender equality and that gender champions have been identified in 48 partner countries. More clarity on the distinction between gender champions and gender focal points would be helpful to understand the role of various people involved in GAP II. Where GAP II implementation has worked best is where the top leadership (Heads of EUD) pushed for it. It is disappointing to note that women constitute only 28 Heads of Delegation out of 138, as the ratio of women in decision-making positions is an important indicator of success for the GAP II.

**Recommendations:**

- *All Heads of EUDs should be encouraged to make GAP II implementation a priority rather than an optional issue.*
- *Gender equality also needs to be reflected in the EU's own HR policy, including via a strong increase in the ratio of women appointed as Head of EU Delegation.*

**Objective 3 - Sufficient Resources:** It is worrying that Gender Focal Points (GFP) exist in only 67 EUDs in partner countries, which represents about half of all EUDs. Moreover, existing Gender Focal Points also continue to be overstretched. The fact that many units which were expected to report, including at HQ level, did not do so, also seems to indicate that human resources are lacking. Finally, as some EUDs and HQ services have requested a feedback on their reporting that could not be provided due to a lack of human resources, it shows that GAP II does not have sufficient resources. Feedback on the first reporting is key to ensure consistency and maintain motivation in the coming years, guaranteeing the quality of the implementation.

**Recommendations:**

- *Gender Focal Points must be appointed in every delegation and have sufficient time, capacity and the mandate to support the analysis, planning and follow up of the work on gender equality.*
- *All staff in EUDs must take responsibility for GAP II implementation—the burden cannot be only on the GFP.*

**Objective 4 - Robust gender evidence:** We welcome the fact that 42, much needed, gender analyses were produced, and that resources were made available for this. However, this only accounts for about one third of all EUDs and unfortunately the analyses carried out were too general to inform the design of action documents for programming. The lack of consultation with stakeholders including local civil society at this stage represents a missed opportunity.

## Recommendations:

- *By 2017, all EUDs must have carried out a comprehensive gender analysis. In order to ensure that the analysis includes enough detail, increased collaboration with civil society – especially women’s organisations – and other local actors, as well as active Member States, is essential. Also essential are sufficient, dedicated human resources at EUDs.*
- *For Member States, a greater exchange of successful practice is needed, and experiences from the UK and Belgium, which are obliged to carry out gender analysis by law, is of special interest.*
- *The impact of the gender analysis for programmes as of 2017 should be clear.*

**Objective 5 - Systematic tracking of results:** It is very encouraging to see that the number of programmes that mainstream gender is on the rise, as this is one of the most important indicators for the GAP II. Unfortunately, we have at the same time seen a decrease in the percentage of targeted actions, which is a pivotal pillar in the three-pronged approach.

Concerning EU funding commitments by DEVCO (2015-2016), the report shows that ODA G1 increased from 38% to 63% (representing commitments of around 6 billion euros in 2016); and decreased on G2 from 4% to 3.68% (representing around 347 million euros). The same trend is noticeable for DG NEAR and other DGs.

It is also important to ensure that all EU-institutions and Member States are using the gender policy markers (G0, G1 and G2) in a coherent way when scoring and reporting on programming.

It is good to see that an age/life cycle approach has been included in some sections, but the attention to the age dimension must be enhanced and be consistent in future reporting, with all data disaggregated by age as well as sex, not least because more efforts are needed to reach girls.

## Recommendations:

- *We recommend the EU to ensure that 20 % of all new programmes score Gender marker 2 (gender as a principle objective) by 2020. This target would count towards the overall target of 85 % for G1 and G2.*
- *More attention needs to be paid to a coherent use of Gender markers across the EU institutions and the Member States.*
- *Data should be disaggregated by sex and age throughout the reporting and we would encourage an evaluation of the Gender-Age marker that has been used by ECHO since 2014, to see whether its use should be extended to development cooperation.*

## B. Thematic objectives

Overall, clarifications would be needed on the selection of thematic objectives under each Priority. The report indicates that Thematic Priority B, Physical and Psychological Integrity, was the most selected of the three. It will be important to follow this up and see what could be done to ensure a more even coverage of the different thematic areas.

It would also be interesting to investigate the discrepancies in the selection of thematic objectives by EUDs, and understand why some of them have had very little take-up (for example, women and

climate change). Furthermore, there seem to be difficulties in mainstreaming gender in sectors such as agriculture, energy and infrastructure, which must be addressed.

**SRHR:** The separate section on SRHR, as requested by Member States, is welcome for a more in-depth review. The report provisionally indicates an increase in disbursements in 2016 on reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health only; this does not necessarily imply an increase for SRHR at large, as monitoring funding for SRHR at large remains a challenge. From the report it also becomes clear that only 23 percent of the EUDs choose to work with the thematic objective 11 on SRHR, and it is not covered by any EU Delegation in the MENA region or the Europe & Central Asia region. The further breakdown on indicators chosen in the reporting is striking and shows that SRHR remains understood primarily as a matter of maternal health and mortality (indicators related to family planning, sexuality education and other sexual health concerns like cervical cancer screening remain very rarely – if ever – taken up). This is a big concern and a gap that needs to be filled.

**Women's rights defenders:** Objective 18, focusing on women's rights organisations and women's human rights defenders, is receiving less attention than expected, considering that they are currently under huge pressure due to the shrinking civic space in many regions. Generally, we are concerned that the thematic priority on political and civil rights, specifically the participation of women and girls in political and civil rights, has been given little priority in GAP II implementation.

**Engagement of men and boys:** Objective 7 on VAWG was the most selected objective in the GAP II, with 77 EU Delegations and 15 EU Member States choosing it for reporting. The report does however mention that very few of the programmes addressing VAWG involve men and boys. It is good to know that this problem has been identified and we hope to see specific programmes that seek to change gender norms and that actively involve men and boys in future programmes related to VAWG and beyond.

**Women's economic empowerment:** We are pleased to see some emphasis on women's economic empowerment and access to financial services (objectives 17 and 15), with a strong focus on access to financial services and productive resources, and rural advisory and community-level financial services, as well as some projects around land tenure. However, informal employment and unpaid care work, which are critical issues in women's economic empowerment, receive little attention.

**Gender responsive budgeting and non-social sectors:** On non-social sectors, there have been very few initiatives related to public financial management and gender responsive budgeting, which is a considerable missed opportunity as this has the potential of being uniquely transformative. The report also shows that programmes and sector dialogues focusing on any area outside of the social sectors, including public finance, public admin reform, but also trade, agriculture and climate change and the environment, are often lacking a gender focus. This is a challenge that is common for both donors and CSOs, and it is important to see how capacity, expertise and best practice can be shared among actors to strengthen this. A separate target on increasing the amount of gender components within these sectors might also be useful.

**Conflict areas:** Work in conflict-affected crisis contexts does not feature significantly in the reports received, apart from a few reports that mention work on National Action Plans for UN Security Council

Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. In the report we cannot find any information on SRHR in emergencies, which indicates that DG ECHO has an important gap to fill in this regard.

**Thematic indicators:** As acknowledged in the report, the thematic indicators do not allow tracking of the EU contribution, or how the EUD is progressing on the GAP – it does not say where the funding goes. CONCORD had flagged this already when GAP II was being drafted, and the definition of the indicators was the part of the process that was not consulted with civil society.

**Recommendations:**

- *The EU institutions should ensure that SRHR is addressed sufficiently on every continent, even if to some extent Member States might complement the European Commission's gap in this regard. Moreover, much more attention should be paid to SRHR in emergencies, which is heavily underfunded.*
- *We urge the EUD to prioritize support to Women Human Rights Defenders and work on equal rights and women's and girls' participation in political and civil life.*
- *Increase programmes that seek to change gender norms and increase work with men and boys.*
- *Increase work on informal employment and unpaid care work – both of which are crucial for women.*
- *Increase attention to gender-responsive budgeting and to non-social sectors, with a separate target on increasing the gender component within these sectors.*
- *In the future we expect the EUD to be as strong as Member States when it comes to the UNSCR 1325 agenda, especially as ECHO is now chairing the Call to Action to end gender-based violence (GBV) in emergencies.*
- *Increase work on the GAP in crisis- and conflict-affected contexts. Improve coordination in that regard between EEAS/ECHO/DEVCO/NEAR.*



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