

Messages on EU Gender Action Plan III

September 2019

Background

The [current EU Gender Action Plan](#) (II, “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020”) is soon coming to an end. To ensure that the EU keeps gender as a top priority in all its external action, CONCORD is calling on the EU to adopt a new Gender Action Plan (III).

Messages

Continue the good work of GAP II

- A new GAP (III) should build and expand on the path laid out in the current GAP (II). As there is a lot of momentum and ownership, and given the **strong content of the GAP 2016-2020**, there should be a high level of alignment between GAP II and GAP III. The new GAP should build on activities and priorities from GAP II.
- A new GAP (III) should continue with its work on institutional and cultural shift and the **3-pronged approach**, where the EU uses **political dialogue, targeted activities and gender mainstreaming** to bring about the transformation of gender relations.
- The GAP III should continue to focus on **all aspects of EU external action**, and not only on development policies, and this at all stages, including implementation and reporting. **Gender must be mainstreamed in all sectors**, including in non-social sectors such as trade, energy, agriculture and migration.

Strengthen the work in GAP III

- To put gender equality on the top of the agenda, and acknowledging that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development will only be achieved if SDG 5 on gender equality and gender targets under other Goals are achieved, the EU needs to demonstrate its commitment at the highest level. Therefore, the next GAP **should be an official Communication**, rather than a Staff Working Document. This would require inter-institutional dialogues and send a strong message to all relevant stakeholders, particularly to EU delegations. It should also be endorsed again by the Member States through Council Conclusions, so that it commits both Member States and EU institutions.
- A new GAP (III) should underline the importance of a more systematic inclusion of gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights in **political dialogue** with partner countries, and notably be systematically included in human rights dialogue and



dialogue on social sectors and beyond. In this regard, commitment to the GAP at the highest political levels must be increased.

- The next GAP should recognise the **importance of involving CSOs** at all levels of consultation, implementation and reporting of the GAP, and to resource them in order to enable them to do so. It is crucial to have women's and girls' rights and feminist organisations at local, national and regional and international level as partners. Especially EU Delegations and Member States' Embassies should be engaging local feminist and women's rights organisations, as this is instrumental to creating ownership and ensuring impact in partner countries. The responsibility to involve these CSOs should not fall in between responsibilities of the CSO focal point and the gender focal point.
- EU delegations should strengthen their **role as coordinator** of various stakeholders and partners to increase the impact of the new GAP.
- The GAP III should **make more consistent references to girls** as well as women throughout its different thematic areas. This goes beyond simply adding "girls" wherever "women" are mentioned: the specific barriers and challenges girls face as well as the proposed actions to overcome them should be made explicit.
- A new GAP should be explicitly **linked to and aligned with the EU's Strategic Approach to Women, Peace and Security**.
- Gender-sensitive humanitarian aid is essential for effective humanitarian response, as emergencies impact differently on men and women, boys and girls--and women have an essential role to play in response. However, humanitarian aid was only marginally included in GAP 2. Rectifying this, **activities to increase gender equality in emergencies must be included in every pillar of the next GAP**.
- The adoption of a GAP III is an opportunity to **go further and deeper** in some areas crucial for the realisation of women's and girls equal rights in partner countries. For example, a much stronger focus on **the impact of macroeconomic policies on women's rights and gender equality** should be applied.
- The GAP III should go further in strengthening its promotion of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). To strengthen the implementation and the monitoring of this engagement, the GAP III should **adopt the comprehensive Gutmacher-Lancet Commission definition of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**.
- While lightly addressed in GAP II, a new GAP needs to go further to **ensure that trade policies are gender-just**. A gender-just trade policy goes much beyond the inclusion of a gender chapter or provision in trade agreements. **It implies undertaking ex-ante and ex-post gendered human rights impact analyses of trade agreements**, and ensuring that trade agreements do not exacerbate existing inequalities or create new ones.



- An important step to increase gender justice would be to **focus on the most marginalised women and girls and those facing intersecting discriminations**.
- The GAP III should acknowledge the adverse impact on women's and girls' rights of the increasing **privatisation of public services**, driven by trade, investment, austerity policies and public-backed private finance towards developing countries.
- GAP II has not addressed the issue of **taxation** in spite of the fact that tax is central to women's and girls' rights. How much tax is raised as well as how it is raised and spent matter enormously for gender equity and should there be a part of the GAP III. Women tend to rely more on public services, including for reproductive health and to reduce their unpaid care work, so proper resourcing for gender-responsive public services is of key concern. Also, while most of tax legislation might look gender-neutral on paper, because of women's particular income, ownership and spending patterns, tax law such as on VAT can carry an implicit bias, often putting a disproportionate burden of contributions on women.
- Despite having an indicator around the **inclusion of women in climate change decision making processes**, this activity has been prioritised least throughout GAP 2 and it should receive more attention under GAP 3. This is crucial as women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change, notably due to persistent cultural and structural gender inequalities. The next GAP should make clear links to the Paris Agreement and also commit to ensure access of women's organisations to international climate funds.

Pre-conditions for impactful GAP implementation:

- The next GAP should focus on **impact for women and girls on the ground**. Therefore all programmes that the EU funds should be based on an analysis of the current situation of women and girls, and the **identification of priority areas of intervention in consultation with women's rights groups themselves**.
- The GAP III should continue on the tracks of the gender transformative vision of GAP II and **put addressing unequal structures and power relations, gender norms, gender-based discrimination and supporting girls and women's agency at its centre**, included in all thematic objectives and supported with indicators and activities. Addressing discrimination is not optional.
- The GAP III should reaffirm that 85% of new programmes should have gender as a significant or principal objective (OECD gender marker 1 or 2). Within this target, 20% of programmes should have gender as a principal objective.
- But achieving gender equality and the objectives of the GAP will only be possible with adequate funding. Therefore we ask that the GAP III includes the following funding commitments for EU institutions and Member States: 85% of ODA should go to programmes having gender as a significant (G1) or as a principal objective (G2). Within this broader commitment, there should be a target of 20% of ODA going to



programmes having gender equality as a principal objective (G2).

- To ensure a more impactful implementation of the GAP and beyond, the EU should (re)commit to **gender budgeting**. This commitment should include concrete steps and achievements.
- In terms of human resources, there is also a need to **increase in house capacity on gender equality**:
 - Provide training and ensure knowledge building so that there is a focus on gender equality at every stage of the programme cycle.
 - Gender focal points must be appointed in every delegation.
 - But implementation is not just a responsibility of gender focal points. The GAP needs to be fully implemented by all actors, including those at a senior level. To ensure this actually happens, implementing the GAP must be part of job descriptions and appraisals.

On monitoring and evaluation:

- The GAP should be accompanied by **clear, measurable, time-bound indicators of success, including an allocation of responsibility for different actors** – European Commission and Member States - and with clear objectives in each partner country, developed with the partner country and local women's CSOs, which are integrated in political dialogue and programming.
- Indicators and M&E systems should moreover:
 - **be in line with**, but not limited to, **the SDGs** and can also be complemented by EU specific indicators based on international human rights standards, such as CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, the IPCD program of action and its follow up conferences, the EU Strategic Approach to WPS and the relevant ILO conventions (e.g. the recently adopted ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the world of work)
 - include both **quantitative indicators and qualitative indicators** such as inclusive monitoring and evaluation. This implies not just measuring the number of people that participate in an activity, but also evaluating the transformative potential/impact of that activity (e.g. in terms of changing mindsets related to gender roles).
 - be aligned with the **EU Development and Cooperation Results Framework**.
- The EU must invest more in collecting **disaggregated data** and in supporting partner countries to do so, in order to know whether the results of interventions are having a positive impact on those furthest behind. In line with SDG target 17.18, data should be disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location
- To facilitate the annual reporting on the GAP, it should be aligned with **existing reporting structures** in the EUDs.



- To ensure an increase in correct reporting, staff must be guided in how to use and report on GAP indicators and OECD **Gender markers**.
- To enhance transparency in reporting on the GAP, both **Member States' and EU delegations' contributions should be made public**. Member States should be encouraged to report more systematically their actions under the GAP and their good practices.

