

Targeted consultation on the EU external action Gender Action Plan (GAP) III - 2021-2025

Submission by ACT Alliance EU

EU Added Value

The EU plays an important leadership role in promoting gender equality globally and in relation to the implementation of international human rights and sustainable development frameworks. We would suggest that an important added value could be the potential for GAP III to promote gender appropriate actions and focus across sectors, for example in relation to EU trade policy, migration policy and other aspects of external action beyond development in which the achievement of women's rights and gender equality are central. In this way, the GAP III could become an important document for guiding the contributions of EU Member States to the Sustainable Development Goals, the imperative to 'leave no-one behind', and the other UN agreements and frameworks that underpin them, including the Addis Ababa Agenda, and the Paris agreement.

The EU also plays a crucial role linking internally-focused strategies such as the Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025 with the externally facing Strategic Framework for Gender Equality Action. From an external perspective, we believe the GAP III can strengthen some gaps that exist in the GES 2020-2025 by: (i) going beyond binary language (men-women/boys-girls); (ii) giving a stronger focus to social, cultural and economic rights; (iii) focusing on equal outcomes rather than equal opportunities; (iv) expanding the work on GBV to encompass the wider definition of violence set out by CEDAW which includes structural violence; and (v) promoting a 'gender equal economy' that not only supports structural reforms to labour markets but also challenges gendered macroeconomic policies that are responsible for 'keeping people behind'.

Priorities for action at global level

The GAP III should prioritise:

- The rights and inclusion of the most marginalised women facing multiple and intersecting barriers to their rights and development outcomes. To develop this priority, the GAP III should strengthen its analysis and data on who are these women (and girls), where they are located, the nature of exclusion and power inequalities that affect them, and who the key stakeholders are maintaining these power structures, thus identifying the most fruitful ways to work for structural changes and open dialogue.
- Macroeconomic policy to create a 'gender equal economy' - i.e. support women's economic rights and economic (self-)empowerment. Particularly important are progressive and accountable tax and fiscal policies (including gender responsive budgeting) that support women's economic (self-)empowerment and finance measures to address the disproportionate burden of unpaid care borne by women and girls, including strengthened provision of public services and infrastructure that support this.
- Support for women's rights and organisations and their inclusion in consultations and decision-making at all levels. It is important for EU Delegations and Member States' embassies to engage with organisations representing women from the most marginalised groups in their specific contexts and to promote action that addresses the intersecting barriers marginalised women face.
- The needs of women and girls affected by conflict and displacement must be addressed and these women included in decision making processes, in particular in peace negotiations and transition out of conflict; but also in all aspects of development contributing to a sustainable

peace, including to develop comprehensive approaches to address violence against women and girls, address economic inequalities and promote normative change.

- Sexual and reproductive health rights must be the central part of health-related activities because of their gendered elements.
- Gender just trade policies and regulation of international investment to ensure that trade and investment contribute to the progressive realisation of human rights and do no harm by exploiting or exacerbating gender or other inequalities or having an adverse impact in ways disproportionately felt by women, girls and marginalised genders. The GAP III could provide for mandatory gender sensitive-human rights due diligence to be applied to business and human rights norms (voluntary and binding), including bilateral trade and investment agreements.
- Gender-appropriate responses to climate change, including financing mechanisms that are both transparent and accessible to climate vulnerable communities and women's rights organisations.

Means for action

- The GAP III could develop a much stronger focus on understanding and responding to the diverse contexts of vulnerability and inequality experienced by marginalised women and girls and other marginalised genders, supported by strong evidence (qualitative as well as quantitative) and disaggregated data. In this, a stronger focus on normative change will be needed.
- The GAP III should include indicators for success that measure the EUs contribution towards progressing gender equality in the Sustainable Development Goals and the principle of 'leave no-one behind'. This could include specific indicators based on key frameworks such as the CEDAW (specially looking at structural violence and how that ties into the structural reform support programme) and the Istanbul Convention (specially looking at how this tied into the Spotlight Initiative).
- Greater investment in data disaggregation and in supporting partner countries to improve the availability of reliable data disaggregated as relevant in national contexts (i.e. to make visible and monitor horizontal inequalities such as those associated with caste, ethnicity or migratory status) as provided for under SDG 17.18, will be critical to improve the focus on the most marginalised individuals and groups. It will be important to also use this data more widely in communications and awareness-raising and ensure data is visible to citizens as well as decision making bodies.
- In response to the erosion of civil society space and the disproportionate impacts of this on rights of women and other marginalised gender, actions should seek to create an enabling environment for a representative cross-section of civil society, promote civic and political rights and rights to freedom of association and assembly. See: <https://actalliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CONCORD-Policy-paper-on-civic-space-March-2018.pdf>
- Greater investment in development cooperation that tackles religious fundamentalism and that fosters a greater integration between women's rights activists/movements and faith-based leaders/organisations.
- Greater recognition of the contributions and perspectives of faith-based organisations in building dialogues on critical issues of gender equality.
- We support the position of CONCORD that the GAP III should include 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). See: [https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CONCORD Messages GAP3 Oct2019.pdf](https://concordeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CONCORD_Messages_GAP3_Oct2019.pdf)