

## Preliminary Recommendations for the new EU Gender Action Plan 2016 - 2020

### Summary of Key Recommendations

The new GAP should:

- Dedicate sufficient **financial and human resources** to gender equality
- Instate true **expertise on gender** within all EU institutions and delegations
- Ensure gender is integrated in all **policy dialogue with partners** through **gender mainstreaming and targeted actions**
- Ensure all **EU and MS programming** contains substantive and measurable gender mainstreaming as well as targeted gender-specific actions
- Ensure that EU commitments to **policy coherence** for sustainable development and **human rights** encompasses positive outcomes for everybody regardless of their age, gender identity or sexual orientation

### Why a new GAP?

The current Gender Action Plan (GAP) was designed for the period from 2010 – 2015. Reviews have highlighted the need for building on what it has achieved, as well as taking into account the challenges it encountered. A new GAP is thus needed in order to strengthen the current European approach towards gender in external action in the coming years.

### Why prioritise gender in development cooperation?

- Every narrative on why a new Gender Action Plan should be adopted should:
  - Emphasise that achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls of all ages is a matter of realising international human rights standards;
  - State that realising gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls of all ages also remains a challenge in the European Union;
  - Emphasise the hugely positive spill over effects of increasing gender equality and empowering women and girls of all ages for a country's economic and social development as well as conflict resolution, making gender equality a precondition for sustainable development;
  - Stress the need not only for strong policies and gender mainstreaming but also concrete targeted actions, particularly in neglected and/or sensitive areas, that can lead to a real impact on the lives of women and girls as well as men and boys.

### Scope and conceptual coherence

- The new GAP should:
  - Clearly state what is intended by "gender" and be consistent throughout the document;
  - Enforce a human rights-based approach;
  - Avoid depicting women and girls as "vulnerable" but instead emphasise their role as development enablers and agents for peace in conflict resolution;

- Support the engagement of men and boys as active agents of change;
- Be based on a broader understanding of gender equality, that includes
  - The fight against discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation, gender minorities, etc...
  - Discussions around social and cultural norms on masculinity and the involvement of men and boys in reflections about inequalities and change;
- Explain how gender inequality intersects with other inequalities, such as race, ethnicity, age, disability, citizenship, and ensure that this understanding underpins the priorities and commitments;
- Explain the links with the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy and new HR&D Action Plan, the tool kits on LGTBI and on a rights-based approach encompassing all human rights, ECHO's gender- and age-sensitive aid approach, and the EU Comprehensive Approach on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 on Women, Peace and Security, EU Guidelines on VAW and Girls and Combating All Forms of Discrimination against them, and the coming EU Strategy for equality between women and men;
- Clearly link to the new SDGs;
- Address the key factors and root causes that create the vicious cycle of discrimination and marginalisation, namely unequal gender power relations, SGBV against women and girls including harmful traditions, lack of access to basic social sectors, such as health, education, water and sanitation and nutrition, unequal access to and control over productive assets, lack of access to SRHR, unequal participation in public and private institutions, political decision making and peace processes, low engagement among boys and men to promote positive norm changes;
- Reaffirm from a gender perspective the importance of implementing national social protection floors in line with EU commitments, particularly the EC Communication of 2012 on Social Protection in Development Cooperation.

## Actions

### ➤ Programmes

- The GAP should include targeted and specific actions, particularly in neglected and/or sensitive areas, and provide guidelines on how to integrate these in bilateral support depending on the priority sectors, regional programmes, etc.

### ➤ Political cooperation

The GAP should propose concrete actions at political level which aim at addressing

- The need to engage with civil society groups that are key stakeholders (women, men, decision makers, media, young people, teachers, etc), throughout the GAP;
- gender issues within the political dialogue with partner countries, e.g. by
  - Including gender concerns in political declarations of high level summits;
  - Highlighting the importance of increasing women's meaningful participation in decision making in order to reach goals on equality, social and economic development and conflict resolution;

- Initiating dialogue on elimination of discriminatory laws, and on gender dimensions of all policy areas;
- Follow up the implementation of international commitments linked to gender (Beijing, ICPD, CEDAW, new SDGs when adopted, UNSCR 1325, etc.);
- Carrying out dialogue on how to include gender sensitive budgeting in national budgets and in budgets for EU funded programmes;

## ➤ Capacity building

- The EU institutions together with the Member States must intensify the work to build capacity of staff, and especially staff in higher positions and management roles, and on developing guidelines on a number of issues including :
  - How to conduct gender analysis taking the key factors for discrimination and marginalisation listed above in order to understand the different needs in different contexts;
  - How to include gender equality and women's and girls' rights in policy dialogue;
  - How to develop gender sensitive budgets;
  - How to include a gender perspective in programming and strategies.

## Political leadership

- Political support is needed to ensure full and effective implementation of the GAP:
  - The EEAS and DEVCO as well as the Member States need to own this process from the high political level (EU Commissioners, Ambassadors, Headquarters, etc);
  - There needs to be a clear division of tasks between all actors involved;
  - There should be a fixed point on the agenda of the Council Foreign Affairs Meeting on the GAP and its implementation – and regular linkages being made between the GAP and internal EU gender policies; as well as other external EU policies (neighbourhood, migration, trade, accession, foreign policies in general) potentially affecting gender.

## Implementation

### ➤ Indicators

- The GAP should be accompanied by clear, measurable, time-bound indicators of success, including an allocation of responsibility for different actors – EU, and Member states -as well as a country plan with objectives for partner countries as part of the political dialogue and programming. Indicators and M&E systems should moreover:
  - be in line with, but not limited by, the SDGs that can also be completed by EU specific indicators;
  - be made in a way that it is not a “ticking box exercise” but measures actual impact;
  - be aligned with the EU Development and Cooperation Results Framework.

### ➤ Financial and human resources support

- To ensure that the EU's financial instruments available for external action (DCI, EDF, EIDHR, IfS and ENPI) supports the implementation of the GAP, references to the goals and targets set out in the GAP must be reflected in the financial regulations, or at a minimum in the new MIPs and NIPs that will be drafted at the Mid Term Review of programmes in 2017;

- To ensure that all EU-funded projects include GEWE as a direct component or is mainstreamed, MS, the European Commission's HQ and all EUDs must adjust their calls for proposals, application forms, evaluation grids and reporting guidelines (interim and final) to ensure that gender equality has been addressed;
  - To ensure a successful implementation of the GAP, funds will also need to be earmarked for capacity building and development of tools and guidelines for staff in the EU institutions as well as MS;
  - Ensure a dedicated gender focal point in each EU delegation, who can devote at least 25% of her/his time to this role, in addition to gender included in job descriptions of all senior staff involved in external action.
- **Accountability mechanisms**
- 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 how to report on Gender markers;
  - Annual reports should be conducted, not only to highlight the gaps in the implementation but also to share best practices and review per country on the objectives and achievements;
  - Accountability mechanisms should particularly aim at senior management, including inclusion of gender in senior staff descriptions, workplans and annual evaluations;
  - Reports to be discussed at the Council FAC, with the Heads of delegations and Head of MS Development agencies as well as with the EP;
  - Annual reports should be followed up and provide a basis for adjusting programming, internal procedures and stepping up policy dialogue when necessary;
  - The MFF mid-term review and margins offer opportunity to adapt the programming if gender is not addressed properly in one country or in one region.
- **Time frame**
- Given the EU budget cycle, it would be more effective to have a GAP that runs from 2016 to 2020 with a mid-term review + implementation reports ;
  - The need for a full implementation from the start of the period should be stressed in the GAP itself.

*The preliminary recommendation for the new EU Gender Action Plan 2016 – 2020 was written by **CONCORD Gender Working Group**, whose overall objective of the CONCORD Gender Working Group, is to ensure that gender is at the centre of EU Development Policy.*

***CONCORD** is the European NGO confederation for Relief and Development. Its 28 national associations, 18 international networks and 2 associate members represent 2,400 NGOs which are supported by millions of citizens across Europe. CONCORD leads reflection and political actions and regularly engages in dialogue with the European institutions and other civil society organisations.*