

Concept note on CSO-LA structured dialogue to enhance the implementation of the EU's
Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025 (GAP III)

25 November 2021
12:00h - 16:45h CET

Background

The **EU's Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025 (GAP III)** aims to accelerate progress on empowering women and girls and safeguard advances in gender equality. The GAP III aims at ensuring the inclusion of civil society and local authority partners, notably at partner country level. To do so, and to enhance its implementation at local level, the Commission and the EEAS are committed to organizing a structured dialogue with an annual event over the next five years of GAP III implementation. Recognizing that the goal of mainstreaming all aspects of gender equality and women and girls' empowerment requires input, understanding and action from all development partners, this structured dialogue is hosted by the Policy Forum on Development (PFD).

The dialogue is intended to be broad in participation and support the inclusion of all actors, including local civil society and local authorities. Notably, one goal is to support the gender perspective of the EU Country Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society. The first dialogue event will take place on the 25th of November 2021, marking the first anniversary of the GAP III adoption.

The event will focus on consultation and partnership with civil society and local authorities in **fostering a strategic approach, increasing alignment and ownership for the promotion of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment at country level.**

Methodology

The meeting will bring together EU officials and representatives from civil society and local authority networks from Europe, regional and global levels. The objectives of this meeting are to:

- Take stock of the first year of implementation of the GAP III, considering the recommendations of the evaluation of GAP II, in particular regarding engagement with civil society and local authority organisations in partner countries.
- Review the start of implementation of GAP III with focus on consultation processes: What has (not) worked? How were women's rights organizations, grassroots organisations and local civil society organisations (CSOs) and local authorities (LAs) consulted in the set-up of the CLIPS?
- Support the continuous dialogue among the EEAS, the Commission and a community of organisations that follow GAP III implementation.
- Identify elements for bolstering the gender perspective in the EU Country Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society.

Expected outcomes include suggestions, good practices and recommendations from civil society and local authority participants regarding:

- What is required at country-level for continuous dialogue, meaningful participation and inclusive engagement of women's rights organisations, grass-root organisations, and local civil society

organisations throughout GAP III implementation?

- How can civil society and local authorities partners contribute to improving monitoring, reporting and communication on GAP III implementation?
- Which are the concrete steps needed to fortify the implementation of GAP III as regards close cooperation between EU Delegations (EUDs), EU Member States, civil society organisations in general, women's rights organisations specifically, and local authorities?

The event will introduce the main rationale and objectives of the GAP III agenda, hear examples of implementation at country level, and then move into discussion groups to look more specifically at the topics: inclusive partnership and dialogue; working together at local level; promoting democratic governance and civic participation; communication, outreach, monitoring and reporting; and women, peace and security. Commissioner Urpilainen will close the session.

Agenda

12:00-12:20 **Welcome and opening**

12:20-13:30 **What has changed at country level? - The GAP III country level implementation plans**

- Implementation of the GAP III in the context of the multi-annual indicative programming of EU external assistance - state of play
- Joint presentations by EU Delegations and civil society representatives of the country-level implementation plans (CLIPs) in Nigeria, Nepal, Nicaragua and Jordan, reflecting promising practices as well as challenges, with a focus on consultations with local civil society organisations, including women's rights, youth/girls, and grass-roots organisations, and with local authorities.

13:30-13:45 *Break*

13:45-15:15 **Discussions in parallel breakout sessions**

Breakout group 1

Inclusive partnership and dialogue

Discussing how, throughout GAP III implementation, to deepen partnerships and dialogue, ensure inclusive engagement of (local) women's rights, youth/girls, grass-roots organisations and local authorities, and further a human rights-based, gender-transformative and intersectional approach.

Guiding questions for the discussion:

- What best practices have emerged from the consultations with CSOs/WCSOs for the development of CLIPs?
- How did the existing platforms for dialogue deliver? Do they accommodate varying degrees of capacity of the organisations? Are they accessible for all interest groups/ organisations that need to engage?
- To what extent do the existing platforms address contexts where the civic space is not conducive for inclusive participation? Are there helpful strategies that have emerged or initiatives that are worth spreading?
- How to strengthen support for women's rights organisations?

Breakout group 2

Working together at the local level

Discussing how to strengthen the involvement of local authorities in GAP III implementation and further cooperation between civil society and local authorities to foster a positive environment for gender equality, shift gender stereotypes and increase the participation of women and girls in local governance.

Guiding questions for the discussion:

- What conditions foster a positive environment for gender equality at the local level?
- Breaking ground: what approaches can cause a virtuous cycle of shifting gender stereotypes and improving participation of women and girls in local governance?

Breakout group 3

Promoting democratic governance and civic participation

Discussing how to support civil society, local authorities, women's and youth organisations and enhance their voice and participation, including through a more inclusive political and policy dialogue, based on a human rights, gender-transformative, intersectional approach.

Guiding questions for the discussion:

- How to enhance the voice of civil society and local authorities?
- How can EU Delegations and EU Member States support stronger women's rights implementation by national authorities? What advocacy approaches have worked/ could work best?
- What types of interventions show better results in strengthening the capacity of national gender equality mechanisms and support for civil society, women's rights organisations, and local authorities?
- How can dialogue become more accessible for all CSOs/WOs/YOs and allow for inclusive participation both at local and national level?

Breakout group 4

Communication, monitoring and reporting

Discussing how to strengthen civil society and local authority participation in monitoring and communication on GAP III implementation and on progress towards gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.

Guiding questions for the discussion:

- How to work together for the implementation of realistic and inclusive communication and outreach (on GAP III, GEWE generally, etc.)?
- How to improve access, availability, and use of reports and accounts of GAP III/ CLIP implementation? Which means of outreach have fit with the capabilities of the rights holders when communicating the EU's contribution to gender equality/ progress on GAP III/ CLIPs?
- What venues can be used to continuously collect and document developing and promising practices from the work of the CSOs/ WOs/YOs?
- Are there examples of facilitating the input from CSOs/ WOs/YOs into documenting, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on gender results?

Breakout group 5

Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

Discussing how to ensure local authorities and civil society and women's (rights) organisations working on WPS as well as women mediators and peacebuilders are included in further implementing the GAP III and the CLIPs.

Guiding questions for the discussion:

- What should be done to ensure that CSOs working on WPS as well as women mediators and peacebuilders are included in further implementing the GAP III and the CLIPs?
- The EU Action Plan on WPS states that EEAS and EUDs should establish and institutionalise a mechanism to consult with women from diverse backgrounds and CSOs, both in Member States and in conflict-related settings, where the EU is operating. How has this commitment been followed up at partner country level? Would needs to be put in place to fulfil this requirement?
- Are conflict analysis and/or conflict sensitivity considerations informed by gender analysis, also taking into account security and safety risks for women and CSOs?

15:15 – 15:30 Break

15:30 – 16:45

Reporting back to plenary by the breakout groups and discussion on key takes away and recommendations.

Closing remarks by Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen