



**Policy
Forum on
Development**

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)

Online global meeting
25 November 2021

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Detailed report	3
Context and methodology	3
Welcome and opening	3
The GAP III country level implementation plans (CLIPs)	4
Summary of thematic group discussions	6
Closing remarks	7
Annex I: Detailed thematic group discussions	8
Inclusive partnership and dialogue	8
Working together at the local level	9
Promoting democratic governance and civic participation	10
Communication, monitoring and reporting	12
Women, peace and security (WPS)	13
Annex II: Participants' organisations	15

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 plan emphasises the need for inclusion of civil society and local authority partners throughout implementation, notably at partner country level. With this aim in mind, the European Commission and the European External Action Service organised the first annual structured dialogue with civil society and local authority partners. Hosted by the Policy Forum on Development, the event was held on November 25, 2021, coinciding with the first anniversary of the GAP III adoption.

The event first introduced the rationale and objectives of the GAP III agenda and presented examples of implementation at country level (section III), and then moved into discussion groups to look more specifically at the following topics: inclusive partnership and dialogue; working together at local level; promoting democratic governance and civic participation; communication, monitoring and reporting; and women, peace and security (section IV and Annex I). After hearing the reports back from the groups (section V), Commissioner Urpilainen closed the event (section VI).

Participants made the following observations in relation to the GAP III country level implementation plans (CLIPs):

- Good practices in the preparation of the CLIPs: the importance of basing the plans on solid gender analysis (specifically, the gender country profiles); aligning plans to ongoing initiatives and opportunities (e.g. EU regional programming, UN programs or government strategies); and conducting participatory consultation processes with stakeholders, especially with organisations that defend women's rights and youth organisations.
- Some strengths of the CLIPs discussed: ownership and partnership; efforts to mainstream gender equity across all policy and programmatic areas, reflecting the diversity of views from different cultural realities; and an intersectional approach.
- What is needed to make the implementation of CLIPs successful: commitment from politicians, policy makers (and donors) and CSOs to continue working on gender; adaptation and updating of EU procedures (templates, indicators, etc.) to monitor progress towards the 85% benchmark of gender targeting in all programs; institutional and long-term support to civil society organisations (CSOs), women's organisations (WOs), women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and women peacebuilders, with special attention to an enabling environment; and a gender transformative approach to change social norms and attitudes.

In the thematic discussions, participants delivered the following recommendations to the EU:

- Recognise that systemic change requires changes in social norms, power dynamics and structures.
- Support links between national, regional and local organisations in consultation and implementation, and report back on what is done with the outcomes of the consultations.
- Prepare for and accommodate cultural, language and other diversities to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives and organisations.
- Include youth organisations and support their capacities.
- Build on existing platforms and provide funding mechanisms.
- Support participation in governance and foster transparency and accountability.
- Promote the involvement of women in politics at all levels, including women's access to decision making at local level. Quotas are helpful, but other barriers, such as violence against women in politics, must be overcome. Local elections must be free and fair.
- Support women's leadership in economic and business activities. For example, enhance digital skills for women's online entrepreneurship, and promote gender equality education.
- Ensure respect for women and girl's rights in all areas of life and policies, from household and work environments to industrial production and international trade, and punish violations.

- Support the most marginalised women's groups, young women and girls in dialogue at all levels. For example, reserve seats specifically for women with disabilities, LGBTQI+ and rural women in any event.
- Recognise communication as a political tool and use it strategically, at the right time and properly tailored to the targeted audience (aiming to also reach the non-convinced public). Communication is a process, and a variety of existing means can be used, from formal media and social media to arts and cultural activities. It is important to close the feedback loop.
- Monitor GAP III and the CLIPs, in a participatory and inclusive manner, jointly with CSOs (including grass-root organisations). Monitoring should also allow for comparisons of country-level developments across a given region or globally.
- Take advantage of existing monitoring mechanisms and look for good practices that could be incentivised and replicated.
- Conduct gender-responsive conflict analysis and mainstream Women Peace and Security (WPS) in all areas of work. Participants welcomed the integration of WPS into GAP III (and related gender-sensitive conflict analysis to ensure a human security approach), bringing both challenges and opportunities for women in fragile and conflict contexts.
- Ensure systematic consultations and enhanced support in terms of funding and building leadership capacities to support the role and expertise of WOs in crisis, fragile and conflict contexts.
- Create secure online and offline spaces and an enabling environment to protect women human rights defenders, women peacebuilders, journalists and activists.
- Initiate dialogue and consultations with WOs and reach out to remote rural areas to include a diversity of voices. Women's meaningful participation in prevention and resolution of conflicts including in peace processes must be prioritised.

Detailed report

I. Context and methodology

The European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) are committed to organising a structured dialogue with an annual event over the next five years of the EU's Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 (GAP III) implementation. This first event brought together EU officials and representatives from more than 80 civil society and local authority networks from Europe, regional and global levels, focused on **fostering a strategic approach, increasing alignment and ownership for the promotion of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment at country level**, to support the gender perspective of the EU Country Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society.

The objectives of this meeting were 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 organisations, 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 included 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 civil society and local authority partners can 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.

II. Welcome and opening

The meeting was opened by **Marlene Holzner**, Head of Unit, INTPA.G2 (Local Authorities, Civil Society and Foundations), who welcomed the participants and pointed out that the consultation coincides with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. **Martin Seychell**, Deputy Director General of DG INTPA, reaffirmed the EU's commitment to include CSOs in implementing gender equality objectives not just as beneficiaries but as partners in policy and political dialogue. Mr Seychell stressed that gender equality was one of the main cross-cutting priorities of the NDICI programming at global, regional and national levels and women and girls would be placed at the heart of a post-pandemic recovery. Since the adoption of GAP III, gender mainstreaming was integrated into all multiannual indicative programmes (MIPs), and EU delegations have been instructed to create country-level implementation plans for GAP III (CLIPs) based on consultations with grassroots organisations, WOs and other CSOs and LAs. Welcoming feedback on this process, he reiterated that the GAP was firmly committed to a gender transformative and intersectional approach and set a concrete target of supporting women's organisations.

PFD co-chair representing civil society, **Tanya Cox**, Director of CONCORD Europe, welcomed the EU's commitment and political will to act on gender equality, in partnership with civil society. She noted that women and girls still face systemic and persistent discrimination and called for the EU to take a gender transformative approach to address this, welcoming the mainstreaming of this approach throughout GAP III. Ms Cox further stressed that achieving change will require taking a systemic approach, calling on the EU to involve civil society in consultations at the level of EU delegations in particular and to allocate sufficient resources to meet its targets. **Frédéric Vallier**, PFD co-chair representing local authorities and Secretary General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), stressed that working with local authorities was crucial to promoting gender equality, given their expertise in meaningful inclusion and implementing gender equality plans at municipal level. He stressed the need to foster women's representation in all forms of governance and the importance of sustainable, equal and democratic local governance to achieve gender equality. Mr Vallier reaffirmed the readiness of LAs to work together with the EU to reach GAP III objectives.

In a video message, **Josep Borrell**, High Representative/Vice-President, described GAP III as the most ambitious EU policy on gender equality yet. Mr Borrell stated that the EU's key aim is to create a world in which gender equality is the norm and not exception, with a priority of combatting gender-based violence (GBV). He reminded participants that the EU was a partner of the Spotlight Initiative and a leader of an Action Coalition in the framework of the Generation Equality Forum.

III. The GAP III country level implementation plans (CLIPs)

Chiara Adamo, Acting Director INTPA.G (Human Development, Migration, Governance and Peace), presented the **state of play of the implementation of the GAP III**. Within the first year of implementation, almost all EU delegations prepared their CLIPs based on an updated gender country profile and 33 delegations conducted sector gender analyses. The priority area most selected by delegations was freedom from gender-based violence, followed by economic and social inequalities, leadership, gender equality and green policies, digital gender divide, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. With regards to partnerships with CSOs and LAs, Ms Adamo specified that almost all delegations reported consultations with WOs and LAs. Oftentimes, the preparation of the CLIPs went hand in hand with preparation of CSO roadmaps and human rights and democracy country strategies. Eighty-five CLIPs mention support to CSOs – mainly via thematic programmes. CLIPs frequently specify actions on gender equality within policy dialogues (e.g., as part of human rights dialogues or partnership and cooperation agreements or when engaging with parliaments), political dialogues (e.g., with ministries in charge of gender equality or relevant line ministries, within steering committees of programmes) and technical level dialogues (e.g., working groups on gender equality). Future planned actions include reinforcing the gender focus of the CSO and human rights and democracy thematic programmes and holding regular dialogues on gender equality at country level and in the framework of the PFD.

The presentation was followed by a discussion moderated by **Sara Simon**, PFD technical assistance Team Leader, among four EU delegations and civil society representatives **on the preparation of the CLIPs**.

H.E. **Nona Deprez**, Head of the EU delegation in **Nepal**, explained that the CLIP was prepared together with other strategic priorities – the human rights and democracy country strategy and the CSO roadmap – to maximise complementarity. The CLIP addresses the most urgent priorities, such as climate change and COVID-19 recovery, setting priorities for green, resilient and inclusive development. In the preparation of the CLIP, Nepalese CSOs, feminist activists, EU embassies, the government and UN Women were consulted. **Cecile Tassin-Pfelzer**, Head of Cooperation of the EU delegation in **Nigeria**, explained that her delegation's CLIP was based on a gender country profile drafted by two Nigerian experts, who conducted a desk review of relevant legislation and policies followed by focus group discussions with households and minority groups, questionnaires and interviews with CSOs, private sector, traditional and religious leaders and government representatives. As in Nepal, the CLIP was drafted at the same time as other strategic documents to ensure their alignment. The EU delegation also engaged with EU member states' embassies in a joint drafting process. **Karin Uuskam**, Desk Officer for Panama and Regional Operations in Central America, presented the process of drafting the CLIP for **Nicaragua**. The first step was the drafting of a gender country profile and analysis, which was informed by consultations with 81 CSOs, EU embassies, experts and UN and international delegations. In addition, the parallel drafting of the CSO roadmap and conflict and violence against women analysis involved consultations with WOs, indigenous movements, independent journalists and youth movements. The CLIP was drafted with a goal of engaging all sections of the delegation in its actions – development, political and communications. **Ereza Pula**, gender focal point of the EU Delegation in **Kosovo**, presented the specific approach used by her delegation, which relied on close cooperation with the Kosovo Women's Network. First a gender analysis identified areas of greatest priority; then consultations were facilitated by the Kosovo Women's Network with diverse CSOs as well as international entities such as the US Special Representative, European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), EU representations, UN agencies, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), NATO, the Kosovo Force (K-FOR). A second round of consultations with civil society allowed for the draft CLIP to be revised and strengthened.

Discussing **the strengths of their respective countries' CLIPs**, **Felicia Iyore Onibon**, President of the Change Managers International Network in **Nigeria**, welcomed the CLIP as reflecting the concerns of civil society and being relevant to the urgent problems relating to gender equality in the country. **Shira Miguel Downs**, Movimiento de Mujeres Nidia White in **Nicaragua**, welcomed the fact that the CLIP mainstreams gender equality across areas such as climate change and economic and social issues, making this a part of all interventions rather than singling it out. She further praised the fact that the CLIP takes an intercultural focus and can be adapted to the different contexts present in the country. **Nicole Farnsworth** of the **Kosovo** Women's Network welcomed the highly consultative process taken to adopt the CLIP. As a result, the CLIP plans to implement 34 GAP III objectives in a broad range of ongoing programming. In addition, the input gathered in the consultation which could not be included in the CLIP will be added as an annex. Ms Farnsworth added that the EU delegation recognises the extensive work with the Kosovo Women's Network by providing compensation for its time, rather than asking it to consult widely and provide input unpaid. **Jaya Luintel** from The Story Kitchen in **Nepal** stated that the greatest strengths of the CLIP were the partnerships developed in its consultation processes. The CLIP is also highly relevant in that it supports two ongoing processes in Nepal: federal reform and decentralisation, which has seen the largest ever number of women elected to positions of responsibility, and the country's graduation from least developed country, which is an opportunity to support women's economic contributions.

Civil society representatives were then asked to describe **the conditions which will support successful implementation of the respective CLIPs**. **Ms Miguel Downs** emphasised the need for political will and a commitment to continue fighting against GBV, support CSOs, and in particular WOs, including through financial support and promoting intersectionality and inclusivity. **Ms Farnsworth** stressed the need for the EU to be a leader on gender equality and encourage partner governments to do so as well. She further urged the EU to include issues related to gender on all project templates and require gender responsive budgeting for all programming. Finally, she stressed the need for working with CSOs, WOs, WHRDs, including through the provision of core and institutional support and long-term sustainable funding. **Ms Luintel** stressed the need to make gender equality and women's empowerment a political objective; push for an enabling environment; improve the implementation of laws against GBV; and adopt a gender transformative approach across the board. **Ms Iyore Onibon** called for greater political buy-in to promoting gender equality; raising awareness of the GAP III and introducing an open monitoring process of its implementation, including by WOs.

IV. Summary of thematic group discussions

Cecilia Olea of the Articulación Feminista Marcosur (AFM), reported on the **communication, monitoring and reporting** breakout group. Ms Olea stressed that communication should be seen as a political act, not just as a tool for reporting on activities. She called for the GAP III and the CLIPs to be broadly communicated, not just within the circles of those already convinced, but to reach those who do not yet have a clear, explicit commitment to gender equality. Ms Olea stressed that monitoring of implementation should be a participative activity, performed by the EU together with civil society. Priority indicators can be adapted to the context of each country, but one or two indicators should be applied across the board to allow the measurement of progress globally. She called for the utilisation of existing reporting mechanisms to avoid duplication of efforts. Finally, she urged the EU to highlight best practices to incentivise CSOs and governments to replicate those.

In response, **Ms Adamo** agreed that communication was a political act and needed to be used strategically. She informed participants that a GAP III awards ceremony to incentivise good practices by EU delegations and replicate them in other contexts was planned. With regards to indicators, she stated that it should be possible to report on common ones in the GAP III reporting. **Charlotte Isaksson** EEAS added that effective communication was outlined as a key feature in GAP III.

Karen Knipp-Rentrop of CARE Austria reported on the discussions of the **Women Peace and Security (WPS)** breakout group. The integration of the WPS agenda into the GAP III is a new approach, which will bring both challenges and opportunities, bringing together different cultures and actors, and providing access to new spaces for WPS. Ms Knipp-Rentrop outlined the group's discussions regarding women's roles in fragile and conflict settings, where women increasingly take on the role of peace builders. However, their contribution is often underestimated by government actors. The EU has a role to play in supporting existing initiatives on peace and reconciliation, challenging stereotypes about WOs, and providing funding for WOs and grassroots organisations active in conflict and post-conflict settings. To do this, funding modalities which enable small organisations to apply for EU funding should be considered. Ms Knipp-Rentrop stressed the importance of regular and meaningful consultations with WOs that covers an agenda that goes beyond "women's issues". This interaction should continue into the implementation, monitoring and evaluation stage. Gender perspectives should be included in conflict analysis performed by women experts and see WPS from a human security approach. Ms Knipp-Rentrop stressed the need to provide protection for WHRDs through safe spaces, security measures and creating an enabling environment. Finally, as women's care obligations increased under COVID-19, their ability to participate decreased, suggesting the need for targeted support to engage in long-term processes.

Ms Adamo agreed on the need to counter stereotyping against WOs and recognise their expertise and added value. In terms of reaching out to actors beyond capitals, the EC has started to collect data on the inclusion of youth and WOs in consultations in its annual corporate reporting, stressing that there are existing good practices in this field. With regards to WHRDs, the EU is a longstanding supporter of their work and funds a dedicated protection mechanism adapted to respond to WHRDs' specific needs. Support for an enabling environment will be part of the new thematic program for civil society. With regards to funding small CSOs, Ms Adamo stressed that while more flexibility was possible in response to COVID-19, this was not possible in normal times; however, she reminded participations that funding is available to grassroots organisations through the Spotlight Initiative. In response to a question about the WPS Humanitarian Action Compact, **Ms Isaksson** clarified that the EU has chosen not to become part of the compact as the EU approach is to include WPS into all 6 Action Coalitions (similar to the approach to include the EU policy framework on WPS into GAP III). As a Generation Equality Forum (GEF) Action Coalition Leader on gender-based violence, the EU is also mainstreaming Conflict-Related Sexual Violence as part of the WPS agenda.

Dalila Loudyi of the Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM Morocco), presented the discussions on **working together at the local level**. She stressed the importance of quotas to increase the participation of women in politics, highlighting however that this measure is not enough on its own to ensure women's true participation in decision-making. Violence, including in the political sphere, was one of the main obstacles identified. Ms Loudyi outlined areas which require EU attention: increasing women's leadership in political, economic and business activity; domestic resource mobilisation through local business and cooperatives; enhancing digital skills to promote women's online entrepreneurship; enhancing education, teacher training and promoting gender equality education; and improving the involvement of women in peace processes. To address these issues, the EU should promote gender budgeting, introduce gender indicators and promote connections between WOs and LAs.

In response, **Ms Adamo** agreed that it is important to look at deterrents to women in politics: violence in the public sphere and online hate speech among others. She acknowledged the need for the EU to be more comprehensive in its approach to combat this. To incentivise women and girls to enter politics, Ms Adamo stressed the need to pay attention to the local level. She further pointed out that domestic resource mobilisation, supporting entrepreneurship and access to finance were already included in the GAP III, although more attention could be provided to the role of cooperatives. Finally, she informed participants that teacher training and education are a key priority for Commissioner Urpilainen, and that EU funding for education in global programming would be increased from 7% to 10%.

Clyde Soto of Articulación Feminista Marcosur (AFM) presented the discussions on **promoting democratic governance and participation**. Ms Soto stressed the need to take a holistic approach to women and girls' needs. In line with this, the EU needs to ensure trade agreements respect the rights of women and girls. She further stressed the need for political and economic support for CSOs, especially in the face of attacks from anti-rights groups, as well as the inclusion of diverse organisations in a dialogue with EU delegations. Financial support for CSOs should be long-term rather than project based. In addition, the EU should amplify the voices of the women's movement and ensure the safety of activists in spaces where governments try to block the participation of civil society. To achieve real change through the CLIPs and GAP III, Ms Soto called for strategic coalitions with key actors such as CSOs, WOs and WHRDs.

Maureen Olyaro of FEMNET Africa presented the discussions on **inclusive partnerships and dialogue**. She called for the EU to provide feedback on the inclusion of the information provided by civil society during consultations and on the implementation of programmes; to support links between national, regional and local organisations; to provide a platform for people with diverse backgrounds, independent of language barriers; to ensure inclusive participation; to resource CSOs through sustainable, direct, and long-term funding. Ms Olyaro outlined existing best practices such as the use of contextual gender analysis in drafting the CLIPs; creating links between local CSOs and INGOs to bring in a global perspective and learn from different contexts; and the availability of funding for grassroots organisations through mechanisms such as the Spotlight Initiative.

V. Closing remarks

Closing remarks were then delivered by **EU Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen**, who recognised that the ongoing pandemic as well as conflict and instability have heavily affected the lives of women and girls, threatening decades of progress towards gender equality and making EU efforts in this area even more important. Ms Urpilainen stressed that the GAP III was designed to be a comprehensive and visionary roadmap, to be delivered through local ownership and multilateral efforts. Consultations with civil society were crucial in the process of drafting the CLIPs – an engagement which is set to continue, strengthened by the 1.5bn EUR thematic programme on civil society, which has a strong focus on WOs, YOs and local CSOs. She further informed participants that the EU is set to launch a flagship global programme on women and youth political participation.

Annex I: Detailed thematic group discussions

Participants were divided into six groups according to six different thematic areas of their choice. In each group, one participant helped with the moderation and another participant with the reporting. The discussions were opened by short presentations of concrete experiences from participants (from the European Commission, CSOs or LAs), followed by an open discussion around specific guiding questions. This annex presents the details of these sessions.

Inclusive partnership and dialogue

This breakout group was moderated by **Serap Altinisik**, Head of Office of Plan International, and discussed how 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 through GAP III implementation.

Maggie Banda of the Women Legal Resources Centre/ Secretariat for the Women Manifesto, Malawi, welcomed the consultations on the CLIP in her country for engaging diverse women's organisations, consulting the government and LAs as well as working groups on gender and human rights. This brought in different perspectives and deepened the context analysis, ensuring that actions under the CLIP would address the lived realities of women. Bringing international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) into the consultation brought global perspectives to local issues, benefitting local organisations. She further welcomed the implementation of activities under the Spotlight Initiative in Malawi, praising the rapid response, involvement of local grassroots organisations and taking a broad approach to combatting GBV. She stressed the role of the EU in creating networking spaces for national-level and local-level CSOs to interact while highlighting the need to ensure that these spaces are not hijacked by actors who appear to be passionate about gender equality and women's rights but lack the necessary commitment or expertise and are coming in solely to access resources.

Stephanie Carette of the EU Delegation in the Philippines stressed that the development of the CLIP was a joint exercise of the gender focal point network and the gender champion, the Ambassador of the Netherlands. The priorities were identified during MIP consultations with CSOs, academia and UN agencies; there were also bilateral meetings with CSOs and grassroots organisations. In addition, a country gender profile was drafted by the University of the Philippines Gender Programme, which consulted a wide range of stakeholders. The profile provides recommendations for the EU on targeted actions. Two frameworks for dialogue were identified: i) the gender group of the EU support to CSOs in awareness raising and advocacy, within which meetings were held with specialised CSOs and grassroots on each CLIP priority, the first one being on SRHR; and ii) the EU CSO roadmap. In this context, a civil society sounding board has been set up, including CSOs and academia to exchange on the implementation of EU MIP and focus actions; some board members have specific gender equality expertise.

What best practices have emerged from the consultations with CSOs/WCSOs for the development of CLIPs?

- The EU delegations' engagement with diverse CSOs and WOs.
- The mainstreaming of gender equality actions into policy areas across the board.
- The use of contextual gender analysis in drafting the CLIPs.
- Creating links between local CSOs and INGOs to bring in a global perspective and learn from different contexts.
- The availability of funding for grassroots organisations through mechanisms such as the Spotlight Initiative.

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?

- Limited time and opportunity to provide input – CSOs require sufficient time to engage and prepare in consultations. This includes limitations to written or online submissions without the opportunity to discuss face-to-face. In case of digital discussions, participation can be limited for those who lack access to online communication tools.
- In cases where other entities (e.g., consultants) were managing the drafting process, there was a lack of clarity on the lead and ownership of the CLIPs.
- Lack of capacity of some delegations to deal with the very ambitious policy document which is GAP III.
- Little focus on domestic resource mobilisation within GAP III and the CLIPs.

- Need to increase inclusion of private sectors actors, including in the framework of the European investment plan.
- Linguistic barriers hinder the participation for groups from ethnic minorities in some contexts.

Other considerations?

- Include cooperatives into the CLIP consultations. Cooperatives are important actors of economic empowerment that can implement a gender-based and human rights-based approach and allow women to exit poverty.
- Include trade unions into consultations as they are very active on gender equality in many contexts and campaigning for the ratification of ILO convention 190.
- Include LGBTQI+ groups, who face intersecting discrimination, into the gender analysis and CLIP priorities.
- EUD should provide feedback on whether input was taken on board for the drafting of the CLIPs; lack of clarity on how CSOs will be involved in the follow up, implementation and monitoring of the CLIPs.
- The need for EU delegations to be proactive in reaching out to CSOs outside of the usual group.
- Consider linking discussions on processes such as the CSO roadmaps and the CLIPs/ GAP III implementation.

How to strengthen support for women's rights organisations (WROs)?

- Take a movement strengthening approach to capture the diversity of the women's movement.
- Work with organisations with a regional or continental mandate as well as national and local ones.
- EU delegations can play a role in raising the voices of LGBTQI+ organisations, speaking out for groups that are not included well enough or are being persecuted.
- Use existing platforms that are developed and implemented by CSOs at the national level; create connections with existing processes, such as the Generation Equality Forum, which has an existing network of youth gender equality activists.
- Provide direct and flexible funding for WOs.

Working together at the local level

This breakout group, moderated by **Amandine Sabourin** of PLATFORMA, discussed 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.

Fatouma Awaleh, of International Association of Francophone Mayors (AIMF), who is the only female mayor of a city in Djibouti, described how women are present in all levels of power in the country, including as ministers, judges in the Supreme Court and in local and regional governance. She described this as a result of a concerted effort started by the creation of a ministry for women in 1989, which has been actively advocating for women's inclusion into political life since then.

Ana Milenic, gender and human rights focal point at the EU delegation in Serbia spoke about positive developments on gender equality in Serbia: the introduction of quotas, which have resulted in 40% of parliamentarians being women and half of the government being composed of women ministers; a new gender equality law, gender equality strategy and strategy for fighting against domestic violence have also been introduced. A coordination body for gender equality, the president of which is a deputy prime minister and the minister for energy and mining, has been established. The EU is currently supporting the creation of a gender equality facility to support the Ministry for European Integration and Ministry for Human Rights and Minority Rights and promoting gender mainstreaming of all EU programs and donor programs managed by Ministry of European Integration. Ms Milenic stressed the existence of a good network of gender focal points and women's organisations in the Western Balkan region, which are supported through a dedicated pillar of the gender equality facility for regional, national and local level activities and projects. She mentioned a good practice of the EU delegation asking for a percentage of all grant agreements with international organisations to be earmarked for WOs.

Verónica Supliguicha of Alas de Colibri in Ecuador stressed that while women are more and more present in LAs in Ecuador, this presence does not necessarily translate into gender equality in politics. Ms Supliguicha stressed that the mere presence of women, if they lack influence over decision making, is not sufficient, calling for gender equality training and gender mainstreaming strategies for LAs. A solution could be the creation of schools at neighbourhood or community level where young girls could learn leadership skills. She further stressed that the deepened digital

divide and obstacles for participation require new inclusion strategies. This is a process that will involve resources and funds for the construction, creation and training of WOs, young women's and migrant women's organisations to develop effective participation models.

What conditions foster a positive environment for gender equality at the local level?

- Mainstream gender equality in all EU projects, ensuring the presence of gender focal points in all EU delegations.
- Provide support to WOs in smaller towns, outside of the capital.
- Link local level strategies with CLIPs and GAP III for meaningful implementation.
- Support the personal and professional development of young women and girls to make them future leaders. Volunteering is a good space for learning through practice.
- Ensure that the gender approach is embraced within Team Europe. Girls and women are vulnerable to crises and rarely included in WPS agenda – they need to be involved in the resilience building process, in the mid- to long-term recovery from a crisis.
- EU delegations should put in place a gender sensitive budget and action plan involving multiple actors at local level, such as LAs, cooperatives and other private sector representatives.
- Implement gender responsive budgeting across the board.
- Provide funding for diverse organisations through different funding modalities, including women's funds.
- Ensure that women's efforts within peace making processes at local level receive adequate attention and recognitions.
- Invest in early education and teacher training to promote the transformation of gender norms.
- Fund training for women entrepreneurs to foster women's economic independence.

Breaking ground: what approaches can cause a virtuous cycle of shifting gender stereotypes and improving participation of women and girls in local governance?

- Introduce quotas to promote women's participation in politics. This is a necessary measure, but not sufficient on its own to ensure women's true participation in decision-making.
- Create capacity building structures to encourage women to not only be part of the political scene but also its leadership and decision-making bodies.
- Support local leaders through networking and capacity building, empowering women politicians at local level by supporting the creation of women's networks.
- Use local council and neighbourhood committees as spaces for women to enter politics and gain experience in decision making.
- Design specific strategies to address the violence faced by female politicians, as this is a highly demotivating factor of women's participation. Violence against women politicians at the local level is specific, as the women who are victims are often not high ranking enough to gain media attention and remain vulnerable.
- Support efforts for participative democracy and adopt gender sensitive approaches and gender budgeting in local planning.
- Rethink and re-evaluate existing methodologies for measuring the influence that women have in policy making.

Promoting democratic governance and civic participation

This breakout group, moderated by **Sascha Gabizon**, Director of Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF), discussed 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 and intersectional approach.

Nazma Akter of the Awaj Foundation in Bangladesh, described the harsh working conditions in the garment sector in the country, which is a major source for European and US markets. On top of poor salaries and working conditions, women in the sector face a high rate of GBV due, among other things, to a lack of laws against sexual harassment. She called for the EU delegation to support the demands of garment workers for decent working conditions and the ratification of ILO convention 190 and for EU-based corporations to make sure that the employees making their products have decent work, fair salaries, sufficient social protection and access to services such as day care centres.

Tania Ivanova from REACTOR in North Macedonia discussed the challenges which have emerged during the pandemic, which has disproportionately affected women and girls in precarious work, where they are

overrepresented. She called for EU support in organising workers and negotiating fair labour policies and welcomed the fact that the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance III had been fully aligned with GAP III thanks to advocacy of local WOs.

How to enhance the voice of civil society and local authorities?

- Provide political and economic support to WOs and provide space for women's demands within EU structures and partner countries. This is urgent given current opposition from anti-rights movements.
- Ensure marginalised voices are represented in formal consultations with the EU delegations, going beyond informal consultations with familiar actors.
- Provide longer term, continuous funding and core support to WOs and youth organisations (YOs), especially emerging organisations whose capacities to advocate for gender equality cannot be built over the course of one project cycle.
- Promote the participation of youth, especially young women, elevating their voices on topics such as SRHR and governance.
- Hold regular, rather than *ad hoc* consultations and introduce a joint monitoring process of CLIP implementation with civil society, development agencies and governments.
- Look for allies beyond civil society; support coalition building between women in politics, media, CSOs, WOs, etc.
- Allow CSOs to access consultations through self-selected preparation groups.
- Support women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in multilateral spaces and defend their work, as they need to feel safe to work.
- Take a strong stance on rights violations, including on workers' rights.

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?

- Take a holistic approach to women and girls' needs and change norms and mechanisms comprehensively to address the diverse challenges faced by them.
- Vocally support women's rights *vis-à-vis* the government through statements or social media posts. In certain contexts, such as in accession countries, the EU voice and recommendations play a significant role in shaping government policy.
- The relationship between CSOs and government can be complicated, with some governments seeing civil society as antagonists. EU delegations could play a role in building a platform for dialogue between governments and CSOs.
- Go beyond CSOs and target women politicians and policy makers in positions of power to achieve norm and legislative change.
- Ensure trade agreements respect the rights of women and girls, as economic growth cannot come at the expense of their rights.

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?

- Empower leaders in the CSO sector to maintain their relationship with government services and institutions even in the event of government change.
- Support a parallel system or shadow mechanism for gender equality reporting and discussions if the government is not willing to engage with CSOs. This should be integrated into the formal system once possible, but it can work on a short- to long-term basis.
- Support the creation of an intermediary consultative body combining voices of CSOs and national mechanisms.

How can dialogue become more accessible for all CSOs/WOs/YOs and allow for inclusive participation both at local and national level?

- Ensure that language, disability or resource barriers are not obstacles to participation. This can be mitigated by providing interpretation, accessibility and compensation for time spent attending consultations.
- Women's funds can be intermediaries in bringing grassroots organisations to consultations or can channel their voices.

Communication, monitoring and reporting

This session, moderated by **Lucy Garrido**, Cotidiano Mujer, Articulación Feminista Marcosur, discussed 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.

Sandra Bareyre, INTPA G1 (Gender Equality, Human Rights and Democratic Governance), presented the requirements for monitoring and reporting for GAP III, which will be subject to annual reporting, to be included in the Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's instruments for financing external actions. In addition, a midterm report will be published at the end of 2023 and an end-term report will be published at the end of 2026.

Diana Garcia Alcubilla of the EU Delegation in Paraguay acknowledged that in some countries, where there is a rise of anti-rights groups such as Paraguay, communicating on gender equality in itself sends a political message. When the EU delegation with its Member States (Team Europe) launched the CLIP in March 2021, it sent a message that this was a cross-cutting priority for EU action in the country. Communicating risks facing anti-rights groups protest gives a strong and important backing to civil society organisations working for gender equality. Ms Garcia shared some challenges relating to monitoring and evaluation, such as having region-wide discussions on progress in case the chosen indicators are not comparable. She suggested that indicators should as much as possible be linked to national indicators on development or equality plans, giving the country a tool to deliver on its own commitments in the framework of processes such as the universal periodic review (UPR) or the voluntary national review (VNR).

Anke Stock of WECF International stated that from the CSO side, communication was seen as very pertinent to supporting the issues at stake. To ensure that this was done in an appropriate way, it is important to hold broad consultations with diverse stakeholders. With regards to monitoring and evaluation, she stressed that smaller organisations were often challenged by demands to collect data or contribute to shadow reports, making it important to provide them with the tools to deliver on this.

How to work together for the implementation of realistic and inclusive communication and outreach (on GAP III, GEWE generally, etc.)?

- Communication should be seen a political act, not just a tool for reporting on activities. It should be a cross cutting element of EU action on gender equality – campaigning to raise awareness of GAP III and the CLIPS should take place. Questioning the methods and language used to produce communication materials is essential for inclusive communication.
- Reach out to different audiences by adapting means of communication to those most likely to reach them – for example social media channels to reach young girls or murals and radio programmes to reach rural or remote communities.
- Talk about the diversity of experiences, including the digital gender gap, which has been a particular challenge in the pandemic.
- Communicate in local, including minority, languages and provide accessibility tools for women and girls with disabilities.
- Make additional efforts to reach those who are not yet committed to gender equality, including politicians, such as public launches for gender equality initiatives such as the CLIPs together with high level speakers and local WOs. Ensure that high-level actors maintain their commitment to gender equality outside of these occasions.
- When providing grants to CSOs, include a budget for communication activities to ensure high quality communication outputs.
- Create new ways of raising awareness and reaching out, such as gender equality awards, testimonials from people whose lives were improved by gender equality action, 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?

- Monitor implementation in a participatory way, by the EU together with civil society. Include politicians, feminist and women's organisations, trade unions, youth groups, organisations working against violence, disabled women's organisations, etc. in monitoring and evaluation activities. Ensure inclusive consultation requires mapping, time engagement and dedicated resources.
- Use gender needs assessments and gender markers to check if the EU is helping to change gender norms, contributing to changing the social conditions in which women and girls live.
- When setting up indicators for monitoring the country context, ensure that there are 1-2 indicators in common across a given region or globally to compare progress across the board.
- Update the guidance note on data collection for EU staff to ensure the collection of data on disabilities.
- Report on best practices and not only failures to incentivise CSOs and governments to replicate those.

What venues can be used to continuously collect and document developing and promising practices from the work of the CSOs/ WOs/YOs?

- Ensure participation of CSOs and LAs, including those from outside of the capital, in data collection, as they often have data on indicators that are different than those of government, and can provide fundamental qualitative input.
- Ensure that the achievements on the ground are reported internationally, e.g., in CSW, COPs, etc. and, when possible, use reporting mechanisms which already exist, such as UPR, VNR and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to avoid duplication of efforts.

Are there examples of facilitating the input from CSOs/ WOs/YOs into documenting, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on gender results?

- Storytelling goes a long way to explain what programmes are doing. Using testimonies of the people concerned talking about on how effective programming has been for them or how impactful a project has been to local women can be very powerful.

Women, peace and security (WPS)

This group, moderated by Dr **Laura Davis** of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), discussed 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. Dr Davis opened the meeting by stating that the integration of the key aspects of WPS into GAP III is a new and exciting development as historically, these two areas have been sitting in different services of the EU institutions, with the GAP III having had previously a centre of gravity for development and WPS on the other hand a more political and Common Foreign and Security Policy one.

The session was opened by a series of presentations. **Charlotte Isaksson**, EEAS, stated that including the EU policy framework on WPS into GAP III was an active choice to position WPS into the broader agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment and as a policy area for all the EU external DGs to implement. Furthermore, establishing gender-responsive leadership is a new requirement for EU leaders and managers under the GAP III, will facilitate more effective implementation for which CSOs could hold the EU accountable. **Stefania Minervino**, INTPA, stated that GAP III was an opportunity for the EU to step up its commitment to WPS, strengthen the focus on gender in situations of conflict and fragility, as well as ensuring that conflict analysis integrates gender analysis and identifies specific conflict sensitivity issues related to gender. In this context, there is a desire to avoid profiling women as victims in situations in conflict – while SGBV is a serious issue, women are far from passive in those settings: they are peace and resilience builders or at times combatants. Ms Minervino stressed that women should be engaged in discussions on peace and reconciliation, although a significant challenge to this is the shrinking space for civil society.

Bojana Ilic from the Helsinki Citizens Assembly in Bosnia Herzegovina discussed how the political crisis in the country placed extra pressure on women's rights. She stressed that the CLIP and GAP III were seen as an opportunity for peacebuilding and promoting WPS in the country, with the EU being able to support existing initiatives and champion reconciliation and representation of women in decision-making. Ms Ilic stressed that the CLIP cannot be implemented without a partnership with WOs and hoped that WOs would be invited to provide input for the country level implementation plan.

Visaka Dharmadasa from the Association of War Affected Women in Sri Lanka pointed out that 22 years since the adoption of the UN resolution 1325, WHRDs and peacebuilders continue facing challenges and their work on

peacebuilding goes unrecognised. She called for ensuring that funding for peacebuilding made it to the intended beneficiaries and for a recognition of women's contribution to peace by EU and member states.

Tito Contreras of the EU Delegation in Colombia stated that while women participated in the peace process in Colombia thanks to the very vibrant women's movement, EU support to the movement faces some challenges. The provision of GAP III to ensure that 85% of the bilateral envelopes is directed towards activities that support gender equality provides room to support women's peacebuilding organisations. However, there is a need to build trust and understand the dynamics of the ideologically diverse movement, which cannot be done on short notice. In addition, bringing representation from remote, border areas to the table can be difficult, as is bringing a Team Europe approach to these discussions.

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?

- Involve WOs in monitoring the CLIPs, allowing for an adjustment of these plans as they are rolled out to reflect the needs and priorities of the women involved.
- Proactively reach out to include new faces – IDPs, young women and others from remote or marginalised communities.
- Support education, create a link between nexus funds and peacebuilding, and between education and political representation.

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? What needs to be put in place to fulfil this requirement?

- Support existing initiatives on peace and reconciliation, challenging stereotypes about WOs by recognising their role, and providing funding for WOs and grassroots organisations active in conflict and post-conflict settings.
- Consider funding modalities which enable small organisations to apply for EU funding, perhaps through the mediation of INGOs.
- To facilitate the process of implementation, conduct broad consultations with civil society and select indicators from existing exercises, such as WPS, CEDAW, etc. to avoid double reporting and extra work for WOs.
- Support conflict analysis produced by women and conduct advocacy based on this.
- Ensure safe spaces and integrated security (physical, psychosocial, and digital security) for WHRDs. In some partner countries, member state embassies have provided such spaces.

Any additional considerations?

- In addition to overcoming the consequence of traditional war, consider and address the new non-traditional security challenges: climate change, pandemics, online violence and harassment.
- Be proactive in promoting a culture of peace and take a human rights-based approach.
- Peacebuilders often maintain open communication with aggressors or perpetrators in the line of their work. As a result, they are sometimes seen as suspicious, also by other CSOs. This makes safety and security, especially for women peacekeepers, essential. In addition, they require support in their caring duties, which have only increased under the pandemic.
- Promote the inclusion of gender mainstreaming into recovery and rehabilitation processes post-conflict, which are often gender blind and failing to address key gender priorities on women's economic empowerment or supporting women's care work.

Annex II: Participants' organisations

CSOs

Action Aid International	International Planned Parenthood Federation
AFEM	International Rescue Committee
African Women's Development and Communication Network	Kosovo Women's Network
Alas de Colibri, Ecuador	Kuña Róga, Paraguay
Alliance Internationale des Femmes	Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation
Articulación Feminista Marcosur	Latin American and Caribbean Network for the defence of the rights of children and adolescents REDLAMYC
Association d'Aide à l'Education de l'Enfant Handicapé	Light for the World
Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc	Movimiento de Mujeres Nidia White, Nicaragua
Association Des Femmes Rapatriées du Burundi- AFRABU	Nigeria Women Environmental Programme
Association of War Affected Women, Sri Lanka	OXFAM
AVSI Foundation	Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania
Awaj Foundation, Bangladesh	Plan International Belgium
BUSINESSMED	Red Cross EU Office
CARE International	Reactor - Research in Action, Macedonia
Centro de la Mujer Peruana “Flora Tristan” - Articulación Feminista Marcosur	Red Jubileo Sur/Américas
Conciliation Resources, United Kingdom	Swedish Federation for LGBTIQ Rights
CONCORD	The Story Kitchen, Nepal
Cordaid	Vietnam Women's Union
Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW)	Voluntary Service Overseas
DUSHIREHAMWE, Burundi	WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform - WIDENetherlands
Eurodad - European Network for Debt and Development	Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF)
EuroMed Feminist Initiative, EFI	Women Environmental Programme (WEP)
European Disability Forum	Women's Association for Rational Development, Azerbaijan
European Partnership for Democracy	Women's Legal Resources Centre, Malawi
European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)	Women's Major Group, Germany
Fairtrade International	Women's Rights Center, Montenegro
Foundation United Women, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Young Feminist Europe
Groupe de Réflexion contre les violences basées sur le genre, Republic of the Congo	ASSOCIATIONS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES
Helsinki Citizens' AssemblyBosnia and Herzegovina	Caribbean Region - Commonwealth Local Government Forum
Iniciativa Nicaraguense Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos, Nicaragua	International Association of Francophone Mayors
	Mairie Centrale, République centrafricaine
	MAIRIE RE LIBREVILLE, Gabon

Malawi Women Councillors caucus

PLATFORMA / Council of European Municipalities and Regions

United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa)

FOUNDATIONS

ENoP - European Network of Political Foundations

Evolution360

Foundation for Tolerance International

Mediterranean Women's fund

WINGS

COOPERATIVES

Cooperative Toudarte, Morocco

International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)

Legacoop

PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANISATION OR ASSOCIATION

International Organisation of Employers (IOE)

NIRAS

TRADE UNIONS

International Trade Union Confederation

International Trade Union Confederation - Asia Pacific