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EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



The Director-General



Secretary General

Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025 (GAP III) Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP-China 2021

The Country level Implementation Plan (CLIP) was presented and discussed with Member States during a meeting in the EU Delegation on 2 September 2021, during which no MS objected to the CLIP. After the CLIP was circulated for revision and comments, nine member States voluntarily signed-off on the final document, for endorsement.

Signed-off by Member State Ambassador or Chargé d’Affaires a.i.:

Germany, Sweden, The Netherlands, Austria, France, Finland, Belgium, Portugal

Signed-off by Member State Deputy Head of the Mission: Denmark

This CLIP follows recommendations of the GAP III, to lay out political and operational strategies for the EUDel and MS, and to advance Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) in China. Findings in the Country Gender Analysis-China, which were discussed with MS in September 2021, informed the drafting of the CLIP. The Roadmap for engagement with CSOs in China is now being prepared (report expected November 2021).

1. Context for EU action on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the country

Although China has achieved some success in advancing gender equality, notably in education and participation in the labour market, the overall picture is mixed.

The country has a history of commitments to gender equality and a wealth of legal provisions protecting from discrimination on the grounds of gender. China has also ratified relevant international conventions. Several gender-progressive legal and policy documents have been recently enacted. Despite the legislative and policy efforts, however, partial implementation and enforcement of protective legislation, in particular protection against violence and discrimination at work, result in significant issues affecting women and girls. In addition, the traditional patriarchal attitude, which portrays women as weaker and inferior to men, persists. As a result, women and girls face social, political, and, often, economic challenges.

The annual Global Gender Gap Report 2020 by the World Economic Forum ranked China 106th out of 153 countries surveyed, three spots down from ranking of 103rd among 149 countries in 2019. China’s ‘Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) ranking has been descending since 2008 (ranked 57th).

Education: China has virtually closed the educational gender gap, with both sexes achieving universal literacy. According to UNESCO (2019), China's literacy rate for 2018 was 96.84 per cent, a 1.72 per cent increase from 2010. While the male literacy rate is 98.47 percentage, for females is 95.16-percentage. Regional disparities in literacy rates persist in China, with worse statistics in less developed rural areas. China's urban-rural disparities further affect equal access to education. A 2016 report by the China Social Welfare Foundation found that while 96.1 per cent of rural girls had enrolled in primary education, only 79.3 per cent moved on to secondary levels. Some note that this drop is due to lower parental expectations and fewer employment opportunities for rural women. For tertiary education, the gender gap is closed. In 2018, the percentage of adults aged 25–34 with tertiary education was the same for women as for men. China is investing heavily to expand tertiary education. Nevertheless, at China's top universities, gender ratios still skew toward men. The share of female students at the undergraduate level was 53 per cent, 50 per cent at the master's level and 39 per cent at the PhD level. The proportion of men is much higher in STEM¹ subjects and less than one-third of female students in China undertake STEM-related degrees. Given the inextricable link between education and employment, women's increased access to education has led to improved job opportunities for women, who had once been spurned from economic engagement by virtue of their gender.

Work related issues: female participation in the labour force is quite high in China. However, China's transition from a poor, socialist, planned economy to an economic powerhouse appears to have eroded some earlier national achievements in gender equality. Gender bias and preconception of traditional gender roles is still prevalent in the workplace, particularly in fields like STEM. Around 30% of women in the STEM fields are likely to leave their jobs in the first year. The current situation includes declining women participation in labour force, widening gender wage gaps, and significant underrepresentation of women in government, business leadership and management. Rapid economic growth has not alleviated discrimination against women rooted in cultural and social 'paternalistic' norms. The decline in women's labour participation is also related to women's increasing burden of unpaid care work at home. This burden is likely to increase in the near future due to newly announced "three-child policy" and aging population. Meanwhile, the earlier retirement age for women affects career paths. Sexual harassment at work is a social problem that needs more attention. One-third of the Chinese workforce are migrants (most often rural poor migrating to cities), and these migrants face serious social and labour discrimination. The outdated household registration system (hukou) restricts migrants' access to social services (health, education, pension...), as migrants have to pay for these services. Women migrant workers are particularly hard-hit by these discriminatory regulations. Although the practice is against the law, both the Chinese government and private Chinese companies use gender-discriminatory job advertisements and subsequent recruitment. For example, the old practice for male preference remains, and inappropriate requests that women should be 'pretty' are frequently featured. Women are also more likely to engage in informal employment, which is associated with less job stability and social insurance.

The gender gap in financial inclusion in China is not as severe as elsewhere in Asia-Pacific, and financial inclusion in China is relatively high. However, Access to **financial resources** (banking), **land ownership** (in marriage due to family registration), being divorced or widow, puts women in a disadvantage, due to customary paternalistic laws, although modern laws forbid discrimination. Inheritance practices follow similar discrimination.

The prevalence of **gender-based violence** (GBV) is of great concern for the priority areas of GAP III. In recent years, China issued and promoted some laws to protect women rights. For example, the Domestic Violence Law, with only partially satisfactory legal definition of "domestic violence" and protection of victims through protective orders was adopted in 2017. At least twelve provinces have passed supporting regulations. China's 2020 Civil Code has three improvements in this field: first, the statute of limitation will not prevent abusers from escaping punishment; second, the New Code lists three specific locations where harassment laws apply: the "school", "enterprises" and "(state) organs."; third, the registration of sex offenders will be introduced by 2022. However, the legislation is poorly enforced and access to justice for victims remains difficult. Victims of abuse often suffer from 'second trauma' in the judiciary system. Meanwhile, it has been difficult to enforce the law, from evidence

¹ STEM subjects are science, technology, engineering, and math.

gathering (victims must do it themselves) to winning in court and seeing protection orders implemented. Police response mechanisms and handling of domestic violence need to be improved. A similar situation occurs when dealing with sexual harassment issues. Another challenges in implementing anti-DV Law is lack of data (including administrative data) and SOPs in all sectors that is involved prevention and response to DV cases, including authorities and social service organisation. Local government usually uses “service procurement modality” for local CSOs to provide services for DV victims. Capacity development for these organisations is especially important, including their own service standards and how to coordinate with and facilitate refer with government authorities’ services.

Pandemic situation: the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the problem of domestic violence. China identified "a three-fold increase in domestic violence cases after imposing quarantine" for three months during the initial outbreak in Wuhan, which confirms the need to improve Domestic Violence Law and its implementation, in solving problems of emergency shelters, and collecting evidence of abuse, as well as ensuring police response to reports of domestic violence in a more positive manner and treatment of victims with more "dignity and respect". Meanwhile, the pandemic also hit women hard in other perspective, including increased burden of care work, and job loss, as women are more likely to be hired informally.

Underlying the above challenges with gender equality is a lingering ‘**patriarchal**’ mind-set and associated ‘regressive’ behaviour and male chauvinism. Moreover, gender-related abuse and violence in the family are often considered a ‘private issue’ and ‘to be solved within a family’. Such perception hinders prompt police and social service intervention, and influences judicial perspectives.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

China’s maternal mortality rate of 2020 was 16.9/100,000, compared with 1990, reduced over 80%. Overall coverage of ante-natal care reached 96.6% (95.8% for rural areas), and hospital delivery rate has been over 99% in recent nearly 10 years. China has also been providing screening program for cervical cancer and breast cancer since 2009, and included the treatment of these two cancers into national insurance scheme of “catastrophic diseases”. These are very positive statistics.

From 1979 to 2015, the "one-child policy" was the Chinese reproductive health policy; China's fertility rate began steadily declining. The one-child policy was a policy designed to meet the government's family planning targets. Its enforcement was implemented through draconian measures such as forced and coerced abortion and sterilization. Since 1987, the percentage of women in the overall population has decreased because of the preference for boys via sex-selective abortion, infanticide, abandonment of babies, and childcare neglect. In 2015, the Chinese government authorized couples to have two children. However, the last census did not yield the expected results in terms of population increase. In 2021, China adopted the "Three-Child policy" aiming at "optimizing the fertility policy" to address the country's ageing population rate. Some ‘supportive measures’ are promised, but seem to fall short of addressing the root causes of the population decrease. There are also implications in the provision of care work, which is ‘expected’ to be borne by women, in the absence of adequate and affordable care solutions provided by the state or market. This coupled with an aging society (and its care work implications) will have a significant effect on women. The time on unpaid care work borne by women is expected to rise. There is a risk that similarly coercive measures may be applied to women in an attempt to increase birth rates. When migrants leave their homesteads, they are confronted with discrimination and a long string of inequities, many of which are perpetuated by China’s longstanding household registration system. Moreover, migrant women have less access to pension or health care since the sexual and reproductive health service in urban settings are not affordable to migrant women (they need to pay out-of-pocket). The migrant population gets older due to the declining birth rate, and workers must continue to work due to lack of pension (with women again more severely affected).

With the increase in homophobic comments online and in media, political statements on ‘girlish boys’ and ‘crisis of masculinity’, and other trends towards traditional conformity, sexual orientation, gender stereotyping and family values, the **LGBT** rights seem to suffer an incremental setback in recent years. It is clear that subjects like feminism, LGBT, and domestic violence have become increasingly sensitive topics for civil society to work on in the last two years.

China's overseas footprint. As China becomes an increasingly important actor in global development, including through direct investments, foreign aid projects, loans and trade with developing countries, it has a significant impact on development pathways of other developing countries and regions. This can manifest itself in a number of ways, including through the environmental and social impact of Chinese infrastructure investment and through evolving trade patterns such as in African natural resources. China's January 2021 White Paper on International Development Cooperation has an increased focus on gender issues, compared to previous policy documents, and some Chinese businesses operating overseas are starting to be more conscious of corporate social responsibility and the social impacts of their operations. However, there is evidence that many Chinese overseas investments do not take into account the gendered impacts of their operations (e.g. consultation with local communities, impact of displacement, differential employment opportunities). As Chinese overseas trade, investment, aid and lending increase, this will become an increasingly important area to consider.

In conclusion, despite many positive gender equality achievements, women and girls face persistent social, political, and, often, economic challenges. The country has a history of commitments to gender equality and a wealth of legal provisions protecting from discrimination on the grounds of gender. The country has also ratified relevant international conventions. However, despite the legislative and policy efforts, among the most significant problems affecting women and girls are those resulting from failures of full implementation and full enforcement of protective legislation, in particular protection against violence and discrimination at work. In addition, the traditional patriarchal attitude, which portrays women as weaker and inferior to men, persists. These developments occur in a specific context in China where engaging with civil society in general is more difficult and gender issues are becoming a more sensitive area of cooperation.

2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

The **overall objectives** of the CLIP are to enhance GEWE in China. The **specific objectives** are to enhance GEWE through gender mainstreaming in all actions, to implement specific actions, to raise awareness, to contribute to political dialogue, and develop capacity of all stakeholders.

The CLIP for China needs to take into account the specific political context in realizing its objectives. The space for public debate and civil society action is highly controlled and restricted. Women's NGOs and the feminist movement face increasing restrictions. Moreover, civil society is finding it increasingly politically sensitive to engage with foreigners, in particular diplomatic missions.

In relation to the 2021-27 programming and in order to reach the GAP III targets, EUDs need to ensure that at least 85 per cent of all new actions will have gender equality as a significant (Gender Marker 1) or principal objective (Gender marker 2) in each priority area/ sector. The GAP III puts forward "key thematic areas of engagement" and possible objectives.

The **selected areas of engagement** are:

- 1) Policy engagement with the government
- 2) Implementation with CSOs
- 3) UN engagement and SDGs

For each of these areas, the **specific thematic objectives** that will be pursued are:

1) Policy engagement with the government.

EU Delegation and MS could engage government and share best practices and how to mitigate challenges. This could happen through structured dialogue with (local) authorities, policy advice, and share best practice from gender sensitive projects, engage parastatal women organizations, etc.

- GBV and DV issues: *Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence*
 - Need improved definitions for DV, sexual violence, rape in marriage/post-relationship, clear definition of discrimination, harassment, etc.

- To counter patriarchal regressive thinking and 'crisis of masculinity'. GBV and DV must come out of the 'private sphere' into a public matter.
- Address and counter sexist language wherever it exists, on the level of (social) media, publicity, and government (e.g. terms like sissy pants, girlish boys, leftover women...).
- Support victims and research best practice and documentation for evidence-based policy advocacy: on DV, protection orders, police response to DV, divorce (over-emphasis on mediation, property for divorced women), inheritance rights for women, handling victims of child abuse, trafficked brides, etc...
- In the justice system, should pilot practical ways to implement progressive laws, including new SOPs, new regulations, legislative proposals, etc. to protect vulnerable victims.
- Economic and social rights: *Capacity development on GEWE and gender mainstreaming (to include consideration of China's overseas activities)*
 - For gender discrimination in employment, address existing issues on job advertisements and reduce the wage gap. Re-programme women's career progression and retirement age; increase the proportion of women in senior/managerial positions, attention to women workers, parental leave and childcare, etc. Recognise the value of, and advocate for reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work.
 - Monitoring social attitudes and stereotypes towards women and men, social pressure on unmarried/ childless women, and women access to land-finances-productive means.
 - Gender standards and guidance including gender marker for gender mainstreaming, quality assurance and monitoring.
 - Application of gender responsive budgeting and a systematic institutional mechanism for tracking, monitoring, and reporting on processes, and outcomes.
 - Systematic capacity development of those responsible for policy and governance of Chinese international overseas activities as well as those of Chinese institutions delivering goods, services and implementing overseas projects. Develop gender capacity of more women led Chinese NGOs, Chinese civil society organizations and Chinese NGOs engaged in social development projects overseas.
- Raising gender awareness in managerial, political, social norms and attitudes.
 - Through actions, workshops and policy dialogue with authorities, always remind that many challenges are known and studied but need action; reiterate the need for implementation of existing progressive laws. Need to strengthen gender disaggregated data collection and analysis, including administrative data, to quantify status and monitor progress. Need to counter the rhetoric using traditions, Chinese values and stability, as an excuse to justify gender imbalances. There is a need for more sex-disaggregated data in all sectors.
 - Need CD (capacity development) for policy dialogue: to mainstream gender. All new policy documents, including white papers, planning documents (five-year plan), should not be gender blind. The blind spots are particularly notable in environment and ecology sector and need: incorporation of gender perspective in environmental policies and legislation, safeguarding the rights of women in environmental decision making, and strengthening SADD in the field.

2) Implementation with CSOs.

- For CSOs / NGOs: mainstream gender in all actions and fund some gender-specific actions
 - Evidence-based advocacy to raise awareness and address gender issues
 - Build capacity in CSOs to include GEWE in their policy dialogue with authorities, and first responders in GBV service provision.
 - Build capacity in CSOs to familiar with international GEWE policy framework (e.g. CEDAW, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action) and engage in constructive policy dialogue with government and international society through international platforms (e.g. CSW).
 - Involve NGO projects linked with academia, for more effective policy dialogue and thought leadership. The next generations of young people, especially young women to champion the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda.
- EUDel, MS and CSOs need 'institutional cultural shift': mainstream gender in all sectors, management level, communication strategy, policy dialogue to include gender, good use of 'champion MS' on gender, insert gender in all Calls for Proposals and projects.
- Engage China in policies to promote GEWE in their overseas trade, investments, aid projects and lending and linking China international NGOs with EU NGOs. Share experience of working with these China international NGOs with other MS.

3) UN engagement and SDGs.

China has been a strong advocate for multilateralism and the UN system. UN's Cooperation Framework signed with Chinese government uses "gender" as one of the 3 core principles and therefore provided space for the UN to work in most of the areas that are listed in the CLIP, including supporting the development of women's organisations and China's footprint overseas.

- Therefor EUDel and MS should consider joining UN (UNWOMEN / UNDP / UNFPA / UNICEF) gender agenda (GBV, green, digital, trade and workforce), Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition, digital transformation, rural revitalisation, and China's growing role at global level and in southern countries. MS could learn from UN approaches, seek synergies and convergence, and where possible cooperate in joint projects, events and campaign activities.
- Engage with UNWOMEN's Generation Equality campaign, marking 25+ years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, especially to support CSO capacity and sustaining their advocacy, building thought and practice leadership through mentoring, coaching, social mobilization and activism.
- Engage with UN Women on standard setting, gender responsive budgeting/financing and strengthening institutional mechanism/capacity for China's overseas engagement, to support gender mainstreaming.
- Explore the localized use of the Gender-based Violence Essential Service Package that UN Women is developing.

3. Targeted action(s) supporting gender equality and women's empowerment

Some examples of specific actions where GEWE is the principal objective in project of the EU Delegation (the four gender projects mentioned below get together 2.5 million EUR funds):

- A project in rural Shaanxi, where Mother and Child Health services are provided to mothers of new-borns (breastfeeding, nutrition), is used as entry point for GEWE (women decision, male engagement at home, positive parenting, etc.).
- A social media project is focusing on justice for women, in domestic violence.

- Two projects support system change injustice and police, when handling girl victims of sexual abuse (child-friendly justice).

All other EUDel projects (e.g. supporting vulnerable groups such as disabled/migrants/informal workers) commit to being gender-sensitive and mainstream GEWE.

Public diplomacy: the use of cultural activities and public diplomacy campaigns on gender issues to promote GEWE to a broader audience (taking into account the internet restrictions), such as informing about the EU's values on gender equality and sharing experiences of challenges and possibilities in achieving GEWE.

4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment

In China, many entities such as National Working Committee on Children and Women under State Council and All-China Women's Federation are valuable entry points for gender actions. For the future, enhancing the dialogue with other relevant Ministries is also important.

At the country level, the EU should also cooperate with other Technical and Financial Partners (TFP) and with a broad range of actors, such as local authorities and civil society organisations, women's rights, activists, human rights defenders, young people, religious and faith-based organisations private sector to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and human rights standard. The synergy should also include International NGOs and UN entities (UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and other UN agencies) that can advance the GEWE agenda in the country. In China, including through the EU chamber of commerce and other available tools, the EU should also cooperate with the private sector to promote gender equality and business and human rights standards in the country and overseas, possibly by sharing European best practices and systematically mainstreaming GEWE into Chinese private sector internal governance and throughout its value chain..

Gender issues and GEWE will be a consistent topic in EU-MS Gender Equality Working Group meetings, Development Counsellors meetings and Political Counsellors meetings. These meetings will continue in a scheduled and structured fashion.

5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities

At the level of partnership in development with China overseas, more than ever before, the EU should cooperate with the government on issues concerning the women, peace, and security agenda at different levels at the UN where China has an important role at the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations and at the UN Security Council.

Meanwhile, for the broader international development cooperation model, China has been rapidly increasing up overseas investments, trade, aid and lending. There are currently no specific policies focusing on gender mainstreaming and gender equality in these areas. Thus, advocating for a specific Policy and Technical Guidance on Gender Issues associated with China's overseas activities should be promoted in future policy and practical engagement, including with policy-makers, CSOs and the business community. UN Women has been discussing and initiating activities with research institute, Chinese government partners and industrial association, to set up GEWE standard and share best practices.

6. Technical Facility and/or financial resources allocated to support GAP III implementation

For the EU Delegation: there are no new bilateral projects, but several projects are still ongoing. The next NDICI programme (Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument) is currently being developed, together with financial streams from Regional Programmes. Civil society will continue to be an important implementation partner through thematic budget lines CSO-LA (Civil

Society Organizations and Local Authorities) and EIDHR (European Initiative on Democracy and Human Rights). In all programmes, the EU Delegation will mainstream gender (as a significant objective in 85% of all new actions) and select some specific actions with gender as principal objective.

Currently from these two thematic budget lines (CSO-LA and EIDHR) the EU Delegation funds 22 ongoing NGO grant projects for a total value of 14.7 million EUR.

Donor	Current total nbr grant projects	Total amount in portfolio	Current total nbr projects specific on gender	Total amount Specific on gender
EUDel	22	14.7 mln EUR	4	2.5 mln EUR

There is currently no information available on Member State funding grants in general, and gender-specific grants in particular (ongoing and planned). A stocktaking exercise in the near future would be helpful to understand the landscape and observe trends.

Date:

Signature by Head of Delegation: