



The Director-General



Secretary General

Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025 Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP *Palestine*¹

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

Gender equality and women's human rights and empowerment are still heavily threatened, violated and unprotected in Palestine. On the one hand, the **Israeli occupation** implies control over people's movement, economic and fiscal systems, thus it causes the violation of women and girls' human and citizenship rights, and it exposes them to political violence. On the other hand, the persisting **Palestinian patriarchal and conservative society** and the radicalisation of some political parties also exerts control over women's and girls' bodies, restrains their social, political, and economic rights, including their sexuality and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and exposes them to different forms of Gender Based Violence Against Women (GBVAW), discriminations and abuses.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a key protection concern in Palestine. According to Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) 2019 Violence Survey, an average of 22% of women are victims of GBV in West Bank; in the Gaza Strip, this percentage increases to 35%. **COVID-19 has increased GBV** and exacerbated structural gender inequalities across Palestinian territories. Conditions created by the pandemic resulted in locking down survivors of violence with their abusers. Additionally, service providers struggled to meet the emerging needs of women at risk due to limited resources. Security and justice services, including protection of violence against women cases have not been considered essential under the state of emergency with the main shelters not taking in new women and courts limiting litigations procedures for cases of the emergency law violations.

The **gender gap** in Palestine remains wide. Even though the Basic law of Palestine clearly states that women have the same rights as men, de facto gender equality remains a challenge. The Palestinian legal framework related to gender equality is scattered, fragmented and sometimes unclear. Furthermore, different bodies of law apply in different regions, and social and religious structures carry significant influence. The overall progress in integrating gender equality issues

^{1 1} This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

has been somewhat a mix bag of success and missed opportunities due to the lack of consistent and coherent political will to address these issues.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has in recent years undertaken a number of actions that aim to address these problems in the long-term, such as ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). There is still work to be done in order to transpose CEDAW and other international Human Rights treaties and conventions into domestic legislation.

Furthermore, the PA has developed a *National Cross-Sectoral Strategy to promote gender equality and equity and the empowerment of Women 2017-2022* which aims to reduce gender gaps, while it has also adopted its most recent *National Action Plan (NAP)* for the period 2020-2024. The NAP was developed by the Ministry of Women's Affairs as the lead of the Higher National Committee for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 (Women, Peace and Security). This NAP focuses on four pillars: (i) Prevention and protection; (ii) Accountability; (iii) Participation; and (iv) Relief and recovery. The PA's second NAP echoes its first in protecting women and girls from the impacts of occupation and conflict, holding the Israeli occupation accountable, and enhancing the participation of Palestinian women in local and international decision-making processes.

Despite the efforts of the Palestinian Authority and institutions, there remain multiple challenges to promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming in **policy development** and implementation in all spheres and sectors in Palestine. Furthermore, the PA has not sufficiently allocated financial resources for the implementation of its Cross-Sectoral Gender Strategy.

The lack of concrete progress in the issues of gender mainstreaming by the Palestinian Authority is attributed to lack of political will at the ministries and leadership's level, poor coordination mechanisms, and poor follow-up, as well as lack of accountability mechanisms in plans and programs.

According to a recent World Bank report², West Bank and Gaza scores last, worldwide, in laws and regulations that restrict **women's economic opportunities**, measuring the interaction between inequality of opportunity for women and labour market dynamics. A recent analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality in Arab World, implemented by UN-WOMEN, points out that women will suffer disproportionately, as women will be most affected by the economic repercussions of the pandemic, not only may they lose their jobs, but they could be forced farther down the road to accept unfair work conditions.

The situation as regards women's rights and economic empowerment is worst in **Gaza Strip**, given that tradition and social norms are particularly strong there. The unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip has reached 52%, of whom 75% are female. The rate of unemployment among young women (15-29) is particularly stark, reaching 92%, compared to 63.2% unemployment among men in the same age group. (PCBS Sep 2020). Achieving legal gender equality proves

² <https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl>

extremely challenging in Gaza given the lack of the PA's reach in terms of legislation and the attitude of the de-facto authority towards gender issues in general.

The European Joint Strategy in support of Palestine (EJS) 2021-2024 - serving as the EU Multi-Annual Programme (MIP) for Palestine - assumes that the political/social context will be challenging, with the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the precarious situation in Gaza, following the May 2021 hostilities, and with Palestine most likely remaining under occupation in the immediate foreseeable future.

Overcoming the above gender gaps and changing the conditions leading to gender inequality require a coordinated and sustained support and engagement with actors at all level by the EU and other development partners in West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip. For that purpose, this CLIP draws on the findings and commitments emanating from consultation processes conducted by the EU with MS, select national institutions and partner civil society organizations.

2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

The overall objective of the planned EU and MS actions (CLIP) aims to promote a society free from gender-based discrimination and violence, where women and men enjoy equal rights and opportunities in the public and private sectors (as stated in the Palestinian "The National Cross-Sectoral Strategy to Promote Gender Equality and Equity and the Empowerment of Women 2017-2022").

To achieve the above overall objective, the EU and MS set to pursue the following Specific Thematic areas:

GAP III Thematic Area of Engagement	GAP III Specific Thematic Objectives
1. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence	<p>1. Women, men, girls, and boys in all their diversity are better protected from all forms of gender-based violence in the public and private spheres, in the workplace and online through legislation and effective enforcement.</p> <p>2. Women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity, who experience sexual and gender-based violence have increased access to essential services and protection.</p> <p>3. Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are better protected from sexual and gender-based violence in fragile and humanitarian crisis situations.</p> <p>4. Women's rights organisations, social movements and other civil society organisations are influential in ending gender-based violence.</p>

3. Promoting economic and social rights and the empowerment of girls and women	<p>1. Increased access for women in all their diversity to financial services and products, and productive resources.</p> <p>2. Women in all their diversity have improved access to entrepreneurship opportunities, including social entrepreneurship, and alternative livelihoods and strengthened participation in the green and circular economy.</p>
4. Promoting equal participation and leadership	<p>2. Women and girls, in all their diversity, have improved access to justice to safeguard their civil and political rights.</p> <p>4. Equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours promoting equal participation and leadership by women and men fostered at community and individual levels – through education, media, culture and sports</p>
5. Integrating the women, peace and security agenda	<p>4. Prevention</p> <p>5. Protection</p> <p>6. Relief and recovery</p>
6. Challenges and opportunities of green transition and digital transformation	<p>2. Women, men, girls and boys in all their diversity participate fully and equally in the digital economy.</p>

This prioritization was informed by the results of the Country Gender Profile developed in 2018 but, more importantly, by consultations with the civil society in both West Bank and Gaza Strip as well as with Member States active in Palestine.

The achievement of these specific thematic objectives will be pursued through a **dual approach** of targeted actions combined with gender mainstreaming, **ensuring close coordination with EU Member States and other relevant partners**, namely through the Gender Technical Working Group, established under the European Joint Strategy.

The LACS Gender Sector Working Group (Gender SWG) that the PMO is willing to establish soon, represents a good opportunity for policy dialogue, exchange of knowledge and advocacy with the PA. The Gender SWG aims to be a platform where governmental entities, CSOs, private sector, main donors and UN agencies will have open dialogue questions, actions proposals and policy papers for the achievement of gender equality in Palestine.

As is the current practice, CSOs will continue to be involved in the design phase of specific actions through regular consultations, as well as implementation of specific actions.

Moreover, and as indicated by civil society in consultations for this document, interventions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) will be designed to work with **youth and men**, particularly local leaders, who are essential to achieve results in promoting societal

changes. In working with youth, social **media** and innovative ways of communication will be taken into consideration.

The EU will focus its interventions in GEWE in the period 2021-24 mainly through gender mainstreaming, particularly in areas concerning economic empowerment and private sector. Gender mainstreaming will have an important weight also in the East Jerusalem Programme, covering an ample range of sectors, as well as in the EU Peace Initiative.

Within the EJS, gender will continue to be a relevant cross-cutting issue and the focus will remain on addressing women's inequalities, in particular improving the participation of women in the economy and labor market and fighting against GBV.

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

Following identification study commissioned by **EU Representative Office** in 2020, a targeted action (G2) has been proposed under AAP 2021 (currently under adoption). This action *"Promoting gender responsive policies and laws in the occupied Palestinian territory"* has been designed jointly with Italy, under the division of labour marked by the European Joint Strategy in which Italy is the lead in gender equality. The purpose of the action is to ensure effective gender mainstreaming in strategies, policies and laws through supporting transparent, accountable and inclusive gender mechanisms, with a particular emphasis on relevant sound strategies for public consultation on gender issues, while also enhancing female employability. A total of €3 million will be implemented by a MS cooperation agency (Italy in this case) with support to CSOs.

Under this action, financial and programming support will be provided to reinforce mechanisms (Ministry of Women's Affairs and related gender units in line Ministries) for gender-responsive policy and law-making. Technical advice and support will be provided for the institutional partners (line ministries, gender units at all levels, statistic institute, etc.) to fully equip and empower them to perform their duties and responsibilities when it comes to gender mainstreaming. To ensure impact and sustainability, this action will closely coordinate with the EU - OECD programme that supports the Palestinian Authority to achieve an effective, transparent and participatory policy- and law-making process set in a clear normative framework. Also, the upcoming action will aim at improving public consultation and dialogue with stakeholders on gender issues in order to address social norms that hinder women's right and to promote the benefits for society of gender equality as a right achievement, with CSOs' support.

The action aims at assisting the PA in fulfilling its commitments to gender equality as highlighted in the National Development Plan as well as in its sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies. This support will also aim at ensuring compliance with international human rights laws and norms, in particular those laid down in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Support to advance women's rights by both the EU Representative Office and EU MS will remain coordinated and complimentary with actions of other development partners. EU support to gender equality will continue in the context of rule of law, human rights and democracy needs.

EU MSs (together with Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom), on the other hand, will continue to support number of actions targeting women. The **Netherlands, Sweden and Spain**, together with EU funding, support the UN Rule of Law programme Sawasya II (2018-2023), which include a 10 M contribution to UN-WOMEN to improve the capacity of security and justice institutions to respond to needs of women and enhance the protection and access to justice and security services of women and children. The programme also works to transform attitudes and behaviours of justice and security service providers towards women and girls. Moreover, the programme will strengthen capacities of institutional stakeholders in gender-sensitive legislative drafting and review.

In the upcoming period, **Austria** foresees continuation of support to CSOs and UNRWA for various GAPIII areas, notably improving access to labour market and elimination of GBV and health issues. **Germany** continues to support CSOs and different Palestinian Ministries on issues of promoting economic rights and women's participation as well as integrating the women, peace and security agenda. **Belgium** will contribute to addressing the challenges of digitalisation and green transition, as well as promoting health and sexual rights among women. Moreover, all their different interventions, Belgium will tackle deep-rooted social norms and perceptions that create or reinforce discrimination based on gender.

Finland will continue to support women's economic resilience and elimination of GBV, promoting human rights and democracy as well as integrating the women, peace and security agenda. **Italy** will continue to support MoWA by strengthening gender mainstreaming within policies and plans to contribute to the empowerment of women and girls and the promotion of their economic and social rights. Furthermore, Italy will continue to support UNICEF, CSOs, MoSD and Attorney General Office (AGO) to promote the rights of vulnerable children in Palestine, including by ensuring freedom from all forms of GBV.

The **UK** will continue to work with CARE International to strengthen affirmative legal and policy measures to support greater inclusion of women and Persons with Dissability (PwD) in public sector leadership, particularly in the justice and security sectors. The project with CARE also supports activities that respond to the increased incidence of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) linked to the COVID19 pandemic. The UK also works with the Ministry of Interior to ensure better integration of women in the Palestinian Authority Security Forces.

In the security sector, the EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (**EUPOLCOPPS**) will work with the Palestinian Civil Police (PCP) in the implementation of hotlines for GBV, together with public awareness campaigns. Also, they will support the PCP Gender Unit (as well as the Gender Unit in the MoI) in implementing gender strategies. Following the launch of a Female Lawyers Network within the Palestinian Bar Association, EUPOLCOPPS will work on increasing women's participation and access to leadership positions within the Palestinian Bar Association. Focus will be also on ensuring gender mainstreaming across insitutions by supporting the establishment of a national team, under Council of Ministers, with participation of key ministries.

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

The 2019 Global Allocation funded Identification study “**Identification study for action on gender equality in Palestine - AAP 2021**” contributed to the drafting of the action “*Promoting gender responsive policies and laws in the occupied Palestinian territory*”. The Identification study provided with recommendations and suggestions of interventions in order to prepare a gender programme for AAP2021.

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Signature by Head of Delegation: 

4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment

In line with the objectives of EU Roadmap for engagement with Civil Society in Palestine 2018-2021, a Structured Dialogue has been set up with a number of civil society platforms, including organisations representing different sectors of population particularly women and youth. These dialogues take place on yearly basis but also on ad-hoc basis whenever consultation on specific issues, such as drafting of CLIP for example, is needed.

The EU and Member States will continue to engage in a dialogue on human rights issues with the PA, locally and through headquarters, and will make use of all instruments at disposal, such as lobbying, demarches, statements, visits and development cooperation. The issues covered in this CLIP will continue to be discussed in, inter alia, the Joint Committee established in Article 63 of the Interim Association Agreement on Trade and Cooperation, which represents, for the time being, the highest level political dialogue the EU carries out with the PA, as well as in the Sub-Committee on Human Rights, Good Governance and the Rule of Law and the Sub-Committee on Social Affairs and Health. Prior to meetings of these Sub-Committees, CSOs working on gender equality and women empowerment will be consulted.

The EU and MS (+) are committed to join forces in promoting policies/laws in favour of women's rights, in line with international standards, vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority. In that sense, special attention will be given to promote the enforcing of existing laws and to put pressure on the adoption of the Family Protection Bill, and on implementing the international commitments on women's rights (namely CEDAW) endorsed by the Palestinian Authority.

5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities

Gender equality will continue to be part of EU political dialogue with the Palestinian Authority and relevant stakeholders. Public diplomacy - social media campaigns, speeches, and events will be organised with the support and collaboration of civil society actors in West Bank and Gaza Strip. Within the framework of the European Joint Strategy, the EU will continue to participate and co-chair the Gender technical working group, led by Italy. Furthermore, the EU has taken up the role of Chair of the Justice Work Group, which also covers gender issues including women's access to justice.

EU and Member States will work closely to develop common strategic communication to improve the impact of EU actions addressing women's rights. In collaboration with relevant stakeholders, and particularly UN-Women, EU and MS will continue to jointly organise events celebrating International Women's day, International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women, International Human Rights day, etc.