

Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025
Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP Azerbaijan

CLIP Azerbaijan

With the adoption by the College of the European Union (EU) Gender Action Plan III: An ambitious agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action (GAP III) on 25 November 2020, the EU reaffirms the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment throughout EU external action at all levels and in all sectors.

This GAP III Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP) is based on the Gender Country Profile elaborated by the EU4Gender Helpdesk, national and sectoral reports, consultations with civil society organisations, the EU Member State representatives and outcomes of discussions within Technical Working Group of GEWE Development partners.

The **overall objective** of the EU action for gender equality and women's empowerment in Azerbaijan is to support elimination of all forms of gender-based violence, strengthening economic and social rights of women, reducing the imbalance in sex ratio and gender inequalities resulting in gender-biased sex selection, as well as women participation in peacebuilding.

The CLIP also echoes the objectives stipulated in the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027 for Azerbaijan. In line with the EU gender action plan (GAP) III, gender equality will be mainstreamed throughout all programmes and actions of the MIP. Specific objective under *Priority area 5: Resilient, fair and inclusive societies* envisages acceleration of progress towards gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. It foresees (a) protection from all forms of gender-based violence and inequalities, including support to implementation of the Istanbul Convention; (b) economic, social rights and empowerment of women through equal participation strengthened.

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

Azerbaijan was ranked 88 out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2019 (scored at 0,756). In the Gender Inequality Index (GII) Azerbaijan has value of 0.323, ranking it 73 out of 162 countries in the 2019 index.

The Government of Azerbaijan (GoA) has declared gender equality in its Constitution (adopted in November 1995) and laws including the Law on Guarantees of Gender Equality (adopted in October 2006). In 2019 the draft of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2020-2024 was prepared and submitted to the Government, though it has not been approved by the Government yet¹. "National Action Plan for Combating Domestic Violence in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2020-2023" was approved by a Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on November 27th, 2020. The Government also adopted the Action Plan on prevention of gender-biased sex selection for the period of 2020-2025. The National Action Plan on the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security for upcoming four years is pending approval of the Cabinet of Ministries.

¹ Rapid Response Support for strategic reforms, ADB, 2020. https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-documents/51355/51355-001-tacr-en_0.pdf

Approximately 14% of Azerbaijani women between 15 and 49 years of age experience intimate partner violence (physical and/or sexual) at least once in their lifetime². According to a Rapid Gender Assessment of 1,512 participants in 2020, 10–18% respondents indicated that they believed discrimination or prejudice against women had increased³. Data in 2019 showed 1 358 cases of domestic violence (compared to 2017 this number was 1 031 cases) reported with 1038 (76.4%) by women and 320 by men (23.6%)⁴. The rapid gender assessment of the COVID-19 impact of women and men in Azerbaijan also concluded that “The reduction in household incomes and the negative impact on psychological health and well-being caused by the COVID-19 related restrictive measures/lockdown are likely to have triggered an escalation of intra-family tensions and violence”.

On the Women, Peace and Security Index, Azerbaijan is ranked 132 out of 172 in 2021⁵.

In 2021, 17.3% (22 out of 125 members) of parliamentary seats are held by women⁶.

In 2020 women’s share in employment is 48.1% compared to 51.9% for men, and women’s unemployment rate sits at 5.9%, compared to 4.1% for men⁷, though the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected women’s work, especially self-employed women⁸.

2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

The EU has committed that at least 85% of all programmes will have gender equality and women’s empowerment as a **significant or principal objective** (Gender Marker 1 or 2⁹). In addition, at least one financial assistance programme implemented by EU Delegation in the framework of the MIP will have gender equality as its **principal objective** (Gender Marker 2) over the period 2021–2027.

The EU Delegation will continue enhancing gender equality in its bilateral cooperation programmes and, where possible, including sex-disaggregated indicators for monitoring and specific activities targeting gender equality.

² UN Women Global database violence against women, <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/azerbaijan#2>

³ The survey received 1,512 responses, with an almost equal division between women (48.6%) and men (51.4%) as survey participants. UN Women and UNFPA. “Rapid Gender Assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of women and men in Azerbaijan.” 2020, <https://azerbaijan.unfpa.org/en/publications/rapid-gender-assessment-impact-covid-19-lives-women-and-men-azerbaijan>.

⁴ AZSTAT, 2019, <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/gender/?lang=en>

⁵ WPS-Index-2021.pdf (georgetown.edu)

⁶ AZSTAT, 2021

⁷ UNSDCF 2021–2025 Azerbaijan.

⁸ UN Women and UNFPA. “Rapid Gender Assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of women and men in Azerbaijan.” <https://azerbaijan.unfpa.org/en/publications/rapid-gender-assessment-impact-covid-19-lives-women-and-men-azerbaijan>

⁹ The OECD used Development Assistance Committee (DAC) gender equality policy markers to track and analyse development financing in support of gender equality and women’s rights. Gender marker 2 means that gender equality is the **principal/main objective** of the project/programme and is fundamental in its design and expected results. The project/programme would not have been undertaken without this objective. **Gender marker 1** means that gender equality is **significant** and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the project/programme, often explained as gender equality being mainstreamed in the project/programme. Gender marker 0 means that the project/programme has been screened against the gender marker but has not been found to target gender equality (**not targeted**).

The EU and its Member States will contribute to the following GAP III key areas of engagement in Azerbaijan:

- Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence;
- Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights;
- Strengthening economic and social rights and the empowerment of girls and women;
- Implementing the women, peace and security agenda.

The engagement in these areas will be in the form of political dialogue and/or specific activities under programmes.

- Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence
- Contributing to improvements of existing legislation and policies linked to gender-based violence so that they meet international standards, being guided by provisions of the Istanbul Convention;
- Supporting inter-governmental coordination and the state support referral system;
- Strengthening the capacity of relevant institutions to implement efficiently “National Action Plan for Combating Domestic Violence in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2020-2023”;
- Ensuring capacity of state agencies in gender-responsible governance, including gender-responsive budgeting and gender-sensitive services;
- Enhancing support to gender-based violence and domestic violence survivors and rehabilitation of perpetrators;
- Enhancing the capacity of law enforcement bodies (police, prosecutors), judges, and local monitoring groups in investigating and prosecuting violence against women and domestic violence and providing survivors with gender-sensitive services
- Supporting civil society and media in countering negative gender stereotypes and preventing gender-based violence at the grass root level;
- Work towards adoption of anti-discrimination legislation, with involvement of women organizations, LGBTQI+ groups and activists in this process;
- Ensuring capacity building (coaching, training, technical discussions) and awareness raising for relevant agencies including media representatives on gender sensitivity issues.

Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights

- Continuing to support efforts to strengthen national policies, systems and public advocacy for advancement of prevention of gender-based sex selection in line with Action Plan for 2020-2025 to prevent gender selection before birth;
- Tackling gender-discriminatory social norms, prevent harmful practices and dismantle barriers;
- Promoting adoption of the Law on reproductive health and rights; Promote family planning and maternal infant mortality topics;
- Promoting further inclusion of reproductive health rights topic in schools curriculum.

Strengthening economic and social rights and the empowerment of girls and women

- Supporting women entrepreneurship and women-led businesses, including social entrepreneurship and promoting the creation of SMEs; supporting both innovative and creative women-led entrepreneurship that can compete at the national and global marketplace;
- Continue investing in better matching skills, in particular through improved vocational education and training, to labour market demands with particular focus on addressing gender disparities;
- Supporting universal social protection systems, and recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work by providing more support for gender-responsive budgeting;
- Supporting public and private partnerships to begin reskilling their workforces (especially women and girls in vulnerable groups) in order to adapt employees' skills and roles in the post-pandemic era, making operating models more resilient ;
- Supporting public and private partnerships to raise technology and digital literacy among women and girls;
- Supporting and promoting women's access to innovative and digital-based vocational education and training;
- Enhancing the capacity of stakeholders to focus on gender-transformative skills building;
- Improving national dialogue process between Government, civil society, gender experts/ organizations and donors' organizations in the area of gender equality and women empowerment.

Implementing the women, peace and security agenda

- Lobbying adoption and follow up implementation of the National Action Plan on the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security;
- Strengthening the capacities and support of women's rights organisations and defenders in their engagement into the areas of peace and security and ensure the rights of vulnerable population, especially women and girls affected by conflict (including IDP women) are protected;
- Integrating gender equality values / gender mainstreaming into the policies of Resettlement plan and programs and to make the response measures more gender sensitive and gender responsive;
- Involving women rights defenders to peace building process and agenda;
- Contributing to multi-stakeholder and substantive participation and decision-making in gender-sensitive planning and strategic re-building in the liberated areas;
- Carrying out regular measures to the identification of specific needs of IDP women on the relocation process.

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

The EU Delegation fostered its bilateral and regional assistance to prevention of gender-based violence. This issue is addressed through Twinning project “Strengthening the capacity of State bodies and local level referral mechanisms to provide safety and support to victims of domestic violence in Azerbaijan”, regional project implemented by the UNFPA/UNW “EU4Gender Equality: Together Against Gender Stereotypes and Gender-Based Violence”, CoE led project

“Raising awareness of the Istanbul Convention and other gender equality standards in Azerbaijan” and through the EU4Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk. The actions cover legal policy development; capacity building of government institutions, judiciary, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, medical staff and journalists; promoting gender equality standards; and encouraging responsible fatherhood and awareness raising of general public.

At the same time the EU-funded UNFPA-led regional project “Addressing Gender-Biased Sex Selection and Related Harmful Practices in the South Caucasus” addresses strengthening multi-sectoral capacities to prevent and respond to son preference and GBSS (Gender biased sex selection), including by providing continuous support to the government in implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the National Action Plan on GBSS (2020–2025). The Action will also enhance the capacities of the relevant national counterparts, CSOs, health-care professionals to ensure that they are fully aware of the issues around sex selection and to address the gaps related to the legal and social policy frameworks that contribute to the reinforcement of son preference and undervaluing of girls in Azerbaijan.

The EU4Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk provides regular support to the national gender machinery through consultations, awareness-raising and capacity building activities.

Further specific actions will be elaborated in the coming years in accordance with the priority areas outlined in the MIP.

4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment

Gender Equality is an important part of the EU-AZ Government communication both within the framework of Partnership Priorities and through the Donor Coordination Mechanism with a dedicated GEWE Technical Group led by UNRC.

The EU and EU MSs joint engagement on GEWE with the Government and other relevant stakeholders, including CSOs shall be achieved through extensive consultations with CSOs, including women’s organisations, opening speeches at roundtables, media interviews, press conferences, and statements disseminated on Twitter and Facebook on gender based violence, as part of the EU’s toolbox on strategic communication and public diplomacy.

Gender equality and human rights are included as a strategic priority in Human Rights and Democracy Strategy 2021-2024. It envisages political and human rights dialogue with relevant state institutions, particularly the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs and Ombudsperson, as well civil society organizations. Specific emphasis is made on building effective social media networks for deeper engagement and content sharing in order to raise awareness and drive opinion change.

5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities

At project’s level public outreach will be organised in the framework of the projects indicated in section 3 and other upcoming national projects.

Organization of regular dialogue with civils society organisations, targeted media and social media campaigns, participation in various sectoral events, the distribution of promo items, contests etc. are among planned outreach activities.

The EU Delegation actively highlights international commemoration days, such as International Women’s Day, International Day of Girl Child, 16 days activism against gender-based violence,

Human Rights Day, stressing the importance of the commemorated issues in its social media posts, sharing relevant information materials, interviews of the Head of Delegation, EU MS Ambassadors and other senior officials.

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

The EU4Gender Equality Reform Helpdesk has been used to develop the Country Gender Profile, and provide assistance in CLIP development. The Reform Helpdesk elaborated Joint Engagement Plan, based on which consultations and trainings to Azerbaijan governmental counterparts will be provided. The EU Delegation Communication support project will also contribute to the promotion of gender equality through the information and communication activities.

Date: 10/6/2022

Signature by Head of Delegation: 