



The Director-General



Secretary General

Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025 **Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP *Yemen (mi-term update)***

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

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Yemen is ranked 183rd country in terms of human development with a **Human Development Index (HDI)** of **0.455**, and ranks among the highest gap countries between men and women (group 5) with a **gender development index (GDI)** of **0.496**. Yemen is ranked 170th among countries according to the **gender inequality index (GI)**, which is estimated at **0.820**.

Yemen has long been characterized by the underdevelopment, poverty, internal and external conflicts, and high rates of gender inequality. Since 2015, gender relations in Yemen have been impacted by the on-going conflict, displacement, severe economic challenges, near collapse of basic services and fractured governance. The war has undermined gender equality, both because of the deterioration of the material circumstances of everyday life and the consolidation of power by male actors who are pursuing patriarchal policies. Overall, the conflict has negatively impacted the lives of most Yemenis, with the intersection of gender, marginalisation and vulnerability playing a significant role.

Since April 2022, the UN-mediated truce has allowed some degree of material and social reconstruction in Yemen. However, progress in gender equality and women’s empowerment (GEWE) has not been prioritized by any of the Parties to the conflict as part of their reconstruction of economic, social and political norms.¹

The escalation of the war and the severe economic crisis has compelled many Yemeni women to prioritise their livelihood and the well-being of their families over their engagement in the public sphere. Approximately 80 per cent of Yemen’s population live in poverty, with women being the most vulnerable. Women-headed households are at higher risk of food insecurity, many having no steady source of income, exposing the families to risk of exploitation, harassment and abuse. While some Yemeni women were empowered to access formal employment and economic opportunity, particularly in households where men are absent because of the war, the sustainability of those developments is unclear.

Over 2.4 million school-aged girls and boys are out of school.² Education access is prioritised to boys. The space for girls’ education in the areas controlled by conservatives and extremists is shrinking.

Women’s access to political power and engagement has deteriorated since 2014³, particularly at the national level and in formal political spheres, including inclusion in peace talks and negotiations.

¹ Country Gender Equality Brief Yemen (UN Women-2023)

² Humanitarian Response Plan (OCHA-2022)

³ Country Gender Equality Brief Yemen (UN Women-2022)

Even prior to the conflict, “gender” was a highly contested and politically charged social concept in Yemen. It was associated by some with necessary and deliberate efforts to support inclusive development, while others attributed it to a “Western agenda” seeking to undermine Yemeni cultural values and relations in the home and in the community.

New restrictions are being imposed on women’s dressing, mobility, access to public space and participation in economic and employment opportunities. Harsher application of male guardianship structures is narrowing women’s autonomy. Violence against “outspoken” or activist women is increasing.⁴

Gender based violence (GBV) is a major issue nationwide. The current conflict has contributed to the increase of GBV. But gender based violence is not new in Yemen. The sociocultural and legal systems are built on deep-rooted gender inequalities. Because of GBV’s many forms, it can manifest differently, including the so called “honour” killings, rape, forced marriage, denial of inheritance rights, movement restrictions, reduced access to education etc.

Major barriers to addressing GBV include the weak awareness of what GBV is across the society, with many women and girls socialised to accept violence as the norm.

The GAP II Gender Analysis for Yemen, conducted in 2018-2019 highlighted the critical challenges that women and girls face. The GAP III Yemen Country Profile evaluation study completed in June 2021 provided an updated situation analysis and identified key recommendations relevant to the priority areas of the GAP III. These documents, as well as similar documents by EU MS, have been part of the analytical basis used to develop the CLIP. The CLIP is aligned with the EU Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy (HRDCS, 2021) and the EU Roadmap for engagement with CSOs for Yemen.

Women’s rights organisations, the UN (UN Women and UNFPA), and EU MS have been consulted for updating the CLIP. They contributed actively to the drafting of this new version of the CLIP.

2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

The overall objectives of EU action for gender equality and women’s empowerment in Yemen are to support an improvement of the rights of women and girls in all areas, including social, economic, political, legal, health and security. The EU also aims to contribute to minimising the negative impacts on gender equality and women’s empowerment by the conflict. In doing so, the EU will aim to address the particular needs of women and men, girls and boys, and to have the views and perspectives of all being taken into account. This approach includes support to efforts aiming at highlighting women, men, girls and boys as positive agents for change. Women’s inclusion in the broader political, social and economic processes are vital, and we must understand not only how women are affected by the conflict, but also how they are part of the solution. The EU will aim for concerted action among donors and international and local organisations to seek to improve the enabling environment given the sensitivity of gender related issues in Yemen. Education is key to achieving progress in many if not all of the areas of engagement. In its engagement for women’s leadership across all six areas of engagement (see below), the EU will seek to bring women leaders from various groups in society – private sector, civil society, tribes and government – different regions and across generations, and actively support that female political leaders, as well as unaffiliated women, are genuinely included.

⁴ Country Gender Equality Brief Yemen (UN Women-2021)

The EU can play an important role in terms of gender equality in Yemen, by integrating the gender theme transversally into all three priority areas of the Strategic Guidance Document for development cooperation with Yemen 2021-2024:

- (i) **Integrated human and social development;**
- (ii) **Promoting economic stability and growth;**
- (iii) **Promoting peace and security.**

Actions in the first priority area “**Integrated human and social development**”, address fundamental structural drivers of the crisis, including loss of livelihoods and gender inequality, as major obstacles to development progress. They may have a primary focus on health, sanitation, nutrition, education, social protection or other areas of human and social development, but seek to address multiple needs in a comprehensive, integrated and inclusive manner. Actions aim to strengthen local institutions and capacities for development, including by supporting civil society actors and fostering links with and capacities of local government actors.

Actions in the second priority area “**Promoting economic stability and growth**”, promote economic stability and growth by engaging with the authorities and other key actors at macro-economic level, through support for the private sector and at community level. These actions also seek to improve incomes and purchasing power at community and household level. Activities seek to involve all segments of the population, with a particular focus on young people, and women’s financial inclusion and economic empowerment. This may include measures to improve women’s access to employment and income generation, financial services, productive resources, entrepreneurship and leadership opportunities.

Regarding the third area of intervention “**Promoting peace and security**”, Yemen’s economic, development and humanitarian crises can ultimately only be sustainably resolved through an end to the armed conflict. Development cooperation actions in this area should contribute to the implementation of the EU’s ‘integrated approach’ to support a sustainable peace in Yemen. Development cooperation actions focus on strengthening capacities, individuals, institutions and structures that contribute to a sustainable and inclusive peace that incorporates the key concerns and perspectives of men and women, girls and boys from all sections of the population. This should be accompanied by reinforced advocacy and engagement on the political level along the same lines.

Through its actions in the coming years, the EU intends to contribute to the six (6) key areas of thematic engagement included in GAP III:

1. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence;
2. Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights;
3. Strengthening economic and social rights and the empowerment of girls and women;
4. Advancing equal participation and leadership;
5. Implementing the women, peace and security agenda;
6. Addressing challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition.

Cooperation, partnerships, joint implementation and engagement with civil society

The potential for synergies, cooperation, partnerships, training and joint implementation with relevant EU Member States is explored and, when possible leveraged, in all six thematic areas of engagement.

The thematic areas of **ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence** and **promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights** are examples where two EU MS currently collaborate and intend to continue doing so in the forthcoming reporting period. The EU and its partners intend to implement actions aimed at contributing to all the specific objectives of the field through awareness-raising activities, advocacy, support for education and socio-economic inclusion.

The EU Delegation is coordinating with EU MS on a common approach to **women's economic empowerment**. This area is probably the most supported. Everything related to the socio-economic empowerment of women, from their access to education to their integration into economic decision-making bodies, including their access to financial and productive resources is covered by the actions of the various partners.

Area of commitment 4, aimed at **advancing equal participation and leadership**, is taken into account by actions aimed at making the conditions and social standards governing the participation of all more equitable participation to public life. In this context, significant support is provided to civil society organizations working in this area. In addition to civil society organizations, political engagements by the EU and its MS should ensure that the topic is raised at all levels.

Regarding **implementing the women, peace and security agenda**, advocacy measures and actions are coordinated. Development Counsellors and Political Counsellors from the EU Delegation and relevant EU MS engage in these areas and highlight the need for sustained engagement and agreement on furthering joint advocacy and outreach.

Finally, area of engagement 6, **targeting the challenges and opportunities linked to the green transition and digital transformation**, is also covered by the projects and programs of the EU and its partners both in terms of access and participation of women in these sectors.

Civil society plays a crucial role in strengthening the role of women in all dimensions. The ownership of civil society actors is needed to make projects and engagement sustainable and suitable to their needs. Cooperation with local NGOs and local governance structures is key. The EU encourages consultations with civil society on Yemen's, while recognising that allocation of resources is also essential. In line with the EU Roadmap for engagement with civil society organisations (CSOs) in Yemen, the EU will increase dialogue with and support for CSOs in Yemen, with a particular focus on women-led CSOs.

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

GAP III aims at increasing the number and effectiveness of actions having gender equality as principal objective with a target of a least one G2 action implemented in each country by 2025.

The Strategic Guidance Document for development cooperation with Yemen 2021-2024 includes gender equality and women's empowerment as a key cross-cutting issue. The EU Delegation is aiming to implement the CLIP primarily through mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment in political dialogue as well as development cooperation actions.

The specific actions within the **priority area (i) Integrated human and social development**, include:

- promoting a multi-sectoral and inclusive approach to improving access for women, men, girls and boys to basic needs and services;
- improving access to sufficient, affordable, safe and nutritious food, particularly for those in the most vulnerable situations, and strengthening food security and nutrition;
- improving access to safe drinking water;
- improving health coverage, working on equitable access to quality and affordable health services for women, men, girls and boys, e.g. by strengthening health systems and sanitation facilities, and enhancing capacity for early warning, risk reduction, management and recovery; promoting inclusive, equitable good-quality formal, informal and non-formal education for girls and boys.

Within the **priority area (ii) Promoting economic stability and growth**, specific areas of engagement include:

- encouraging and empowering women to play a greater economic and decision-making role, and promoting environments and societal attitudes that are more supportive of women taking such roles;
- supporting efforts to improve private sector development, with a particular focus on women-led enterprises and low-carbon climate-resilient green growth

Regarding the **priority area (iii) Promoting peace and security**, specific areas of engagement include:

- building communities' and individual women's and men's resilience to political, economic, environmental, demographic and societal pressures and shocks;
- increasing women's participation in decision-making affecting peace and security, including in planning for recovery and reconstruction;
- supporting transitional security systems as steps towards broader security-sector reform that gradually provides women and men, communities and state actors with more effective and accountable security;
- combating discrimination in all its forms and promoting the principle of equality, in particular gender equality and the rights of people belonging to minorities;
- supporting civil society and its role in organising communities, peace-building and advocacy on behalf of marginalised groups;
- promoting an enabling space for civil society and citizens' engagement in political decision-making and links to local government actors;
- reaching out to young women and men, the future of Yemen, with relevant peace education and communication.
- ensuring that the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda, including women's meaningful participation in decision-making affecting peace and security, is regularly raised in political dialogues with the parties to the conflict and other key actors, notably the office of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen (OSESFY).

In addition to the support under the NDICI, women's organisations and organisations working on gender equality receive support under thematic budget lines and pillars. The recent call for proposals 2023 "Support to Women and Children's rights in Yemen", allowed the delegation to finance two projects. Both of them aim to enhance the capacities of women and girls to know and claim for their rights and improve their role in the society, empowering them as well in an economic way to gain autonomy and support their families.

The delegation received, in the last quarter of 2023, additional funds that will allow for the contracting of at least one intervention oriented to reinforce the capacities of women led and/or gender equality oriented CSOs and to contribute to the wellbeing of women and girls in Yemen. The aim of the delegation is for this action to be a G2⁵.

Some EU MS also support projects on GBV, SRHR, economic empowerment, WPS and local peacebuilding, including support to Yemen's National Action Plan (NAP) for WPS.

4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment

The areas of engagement 4 "**Advancing equal participation and leadership**" and 6 "**Addressing challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition**", are regularly included in dialogues with state institutions, de facto authorities and other stakeholders in Yemen. Continued dialogue with the UN Special Envoy and the envoy's office on these target areas is needed to secure

⁵ Defined as G2 actions in line with OECD gender maker G2. These actions should aim at achieving a long-lasting change tackling harmful gender norms and stereotypes, by implementing a comprehensive and gender-transformative approach.

women’s meaningful participation in the UN led mediation efforts. The presence of the EU MS on the UNSC should be capitalised on.

While it is important for the EU to continue to strengthen the engagement and influence of Yemeni women in track II-dialogues and alternative conflict resolution mechanisms, it is crucial to increase efforts to link Track II to Track I in Yemen. To achieve the overall objective of advancing the WPS agenda in Yemen, the EU must address the lack of political will among key Yemeni stakeholders. Target area 3 will be included in policy dialogues within the framework of the Yemen Economic Development Platform (YEDP) currently being set up by the EU Delegation. Discussions with and outreach towards line Ministries, and other relevant state institutions and de facto authorities are foreseen for all target areas. Regular dialogue on gender equality and women’s empowerment is foreseen in the framework of the CSO Roadmap.

EU HoMs are well placed to commit to prioritising dialogue on gender equality and women’s rights in their regular internal meetings, as well as external meetings with Yemeni officials and stakeholders. Through its GAP III, the EU has committed to “lead by example”, and recognition of gender dimensions and support to women’s leadership and inclusion should be an integral part of any engagement.

5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities

Gender perspectives are mainstreamed through the communications work of the EU Delegation. The EU will increase the visibility of EU-funded activities regarding women’s rights and women’s contribution to peace and development in Yemen.

Public diplomacy is used and will be used more frequently to highlight the targeted areas, including women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in the peace process.

Specific communication and/or outreach activities are conducted on yearly basis to mark events such as the International Women’s Day (8th Marc), the anniversary of the UNSC resolution 1325 (31st October) and the 16 days of activism against gender based violence (25 November – 10 December).

Broader EU activities on culture, creative industries and digitalisation should aim to strengthen the visibility and voices of Yemeni women.

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

The support measures available to the EU Delegation within the thematic programs “European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights” and “Support Program for Civil Society Organizations” may take into consideration the commitment of technical assistance for the updating of the country's gender profile, for sectoral analyzes on gender, the transversal integration of the gender dimension in future programs, training, reports, communication activities, etc. The indicative amount and the main planned activities are to be defined.

Date:

Signature by Head of Delegation: