



TRANSFORMING LIVES?

EU Gender Action Plan II From Implementation to Impact

CONCORD

European NGO confederation for relief and development

ABOUT CONCORD

CONCORD is the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development.

Our members are:

28

National Platforms

23

Networks

04

Associate Members

Which represent over 2.600 NGOs supported by millions of citizens all around Europe.

Our confederation brings development NGOs together to strengthen their political impact at the European and global levels. United, we advocate for Europe-wide policies to promote sustainable economic, environmental and social development based on human rights, justice and gender equality. We also work with regional and global civil society allies to ensure that EU policies are coherent in promoting sustainable development in partner countries.

More at: concordeurope.org

ABOUT THIS PAPER

In September 2015, the EU adopted the Joint Staff Working Document 'Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020', also known as 'GAP II'. Two years later, its first annual progress report showed that although some important steps were taken to implement the EU commitments, a lot has been about process, awareness raising and capacity building, whereas it remains unclear to what extent GAP II has had or will have a transformative impact on women's and girls' lives. Key challenges remain and much still needs to be done to ensure all EU actors meet GAP II commitments and all key priorities and gender-related SDGs are adequately addressed in the EU's external action.

With this report, CONCORD aims to demonstrate, with the help of examples, how the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 is being implemented, and give recommendations on how to bring about a more impactful implementation, in particular in light of the GAP mid-term review, as an important contribution to women's and girl's human rights and the achievement of sustainable development worldwide.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Author: Professor Gill Allwood, Nottingham Trent University, UK

With valuable contributions from: Aurore Guieu (IPPF EN), Alba Gonzalez (CBM), Celine Giertha (CONCORD Sweden), Inge Brees (CARE International), Isabelle Brachet (ActionAid International), Alette Paul (Woord en Daad), Janine Wurzer (WIDE+) and Jussi Kanner (Kehys)

Coordination: Lonne Poissonnier (CONCORD Europe)

CONCORD would like to thank all interviewees.

Design: www.profigrafik.sk – Hélène Debaisieux (CONCORD Europe)

Published: CONCORD Europe – Rue de l'industrie 10, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

Year of publication: 2018

Cover image: Women working in the construction sector in Hôl An, Vietnam - Credit: Photo by Kate Ferguson on Unsplash

The positions adopted in this paper are those of CONCORD Europe.

For further information about this report, please contact Lonne Poissonnier – Policy and Advocacy Coordinator

– lonne.poissonnier@concordeurope.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	3
BACKGROUND TO GAP II	3
GAP II	3
HOW HAS GAP II BEEN IMPLEMENTED?	3
LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES	4
MEASURING IMPACT	5
CASE STUDIES	6
GHANA	7
National Gender Machinery, Laws and Policy	7
Gender Equality	7
EU development cooperation in Ghana	8
How is GAP II being implemented?	9
What impact is GAP II having?	9
The Conclusion	10
VIETNAM	11
National Gender Machinery, Laws and Policy	11
Gender Equality	12
EU Development Cooperation in Vietnam	13
How is GAP II being implemented?	13
What impact is GAP II having?	14
Conclusion	15
RWANDA	16
National Gender Machinery, Laws and Policy	17
Gender Equality	17
EU Development Cooperation in Rwanda	18
How is GAP II being implemented?	18
What impact is GAP II having?	19
Conclusion	20
CONCLUSION	21
RECOMMENDATIONS	23
BIBLIOGRAPHY	25
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	27

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Description: Pottery

Credit: Photo by Swapnil Dwivedi on Unsplash

The EU's second Gender Action Plan (GAP II) is the framework for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the EU's external relations. Lessons learnt from its predecessor, GAP I, have indicated that the quality of implementation will be key in GAP II. The European Commission's first annual report is critical and reflective. However, qualitative studies are needed to complement its focus on quantitative data and process. **This report aims to go beyond the question of whether or not GAP II is being effectively implemented to ask whether it is having an impact on the lives of diverse groups of women and girls, men and boys, in the partner countries.** Impact is context-specific and needs to be measured within the broader social, economic, political and cultural environment. The experiences and views of civil society organisations (CSOs) and beneficiaries, as well as those responsible for implementing the GAP, are crucial to the case studies, which ask what lessons have been learnt and what challenges remain.

GHANA

The wider external environment is relatively conducive to policy and practice that advance gender equality. Legal and policy frameworks are in place, but implementation remains a concern. Challenges include the influence of patriarchal cultural norms, beliefs and practices; poverty; and the lack of resources, including the effect of declining overseas development aid (ODA). Gender inequalities intersect with regional diversity and are accentuated for women with disabilities. Implementation of GAP II has been

stalled by the failure to conduct a Country Gender Analysis before 2018. Efforts are being made to increase coordination between the European Union Delegation (EUD) and Member States (MS) around GAP II. In Ghana, as in the other countries in this study, Member States are critical of the reporting template and timetable, and there is under-reporting of their activities. Projects funded by the EU and the Member States, and implemented by CSOs, are having an impact in communities and contributing to the transformation of ideas, beliefs and practices at the local level. A causal link between GAP II and positive change is hard to establish. However, the efforts of the various actors are mutually reinforcing and, combined with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have a positive effect in galvanising support for shared objectives. Awareness of GAP II outside the EU Delegation is low and communication with, and coordination of, the various actors could be improved and could be harnessed into GAP II impact. CSO activity is bringing about change, but this is not reflected in the GAP II process. CSOs are keen to engage with the EU Delegation and call for closer collaboration in order to achieve shared aims.

VIETNAM

The wider context is relatively conducive to gender equality policy and practice. Political will and leadership exist. There is increased awareness and a commitment to the SDGs. Constitutional, legal and policy commitments to gender equality are in place, but implementation remains weak, and social

and cultural norms act as a barrier to the realisation of gender equality. Vietnam's progress towards gender equality masks significant differences across regions, ethnic groups and social classes. Declining overseas development aid and the increasing role of non-traditional donors represent a challenge for the sustainability of gender projects and programmes. There was no Gender Impact Assessment for the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement, due to be signed in 2018, despite the fact that all trade agreements need to be gender sensitive in order to avoid adverse gendered effects. The EU Delegation is showing signs of good practice in its implementation of GAP II. There is internal commitment and gender champions, and there is some external advocacy, including policy dialogue. There is also some collaboration with CSOs. Some Member States are very active on gender, but this is not always reflected in GAP II reporting. Projects and programmes funded by the EU Delegation and Member States and implemented by CSOs are having a positive impact on the lives of women and girls and on gender relations at the community level. However, the EU Delegation should engage more actively with CSOs around GAP II to enhance the positive impact of their work on the ground.

RWANDA

Rwanda has perhaps been a victim of its own perceived success as a country where gender equality is seen as an issue which has been solved. The wider external environment is eminently conducive to gender equality policy and practice. There is strong political will and commitment by the country's leadership. Gender-responsive budgeting is a requirement for all sectors. Laws and policy on gender are extensive. However, implementation remains a challenge and inequalities persist. Mindsets and social norms need to change, particularly in rural areas. The EU Delegation has a committed Gender Focal Point, but no senior gender champions. It has not yet conducted a Country Gender Analysis, and neither of the two policy dialogues in 2017 mentioned gender. Engagement with CSOs around GAP II is limited, although at the community level, CSOs (sometimes funded by the EU Delegation or the Member States) are bringing about change and contributing to the achievement of GAP II objectives. The EU Delegation's gender mainstreamed agricultural programmes could be more visible, and the EU Delegation could play a more active leadership role on gender, bringing the Member States together to speak with a single voice, engaging fully with CSOs, and reaching out to government. This requires commitment throughout the EU Delegation. Member states are active around gender. However, many of their activities have not been reported through the GAP process.

CONCLUSION

The impact of GAP II could not have been fully realised in the short time since its introduction. However, this study shows evidence of enabling factors for its positive impact in the mid-long-term. In all three countries, there is an awareness of, and political commitment to, gender equality and women's empowerment. Policies and gender machinery are in place, although questions remain around implementation, and impact varies across population groups. Where the objectives of GAP II

match those of other donors and of the SDGs, strategic efforts to achieve them have a mutually reinforcing effect. The EU Delegation can play a leadership role in this coordination. In the three countries studied here, this potential for leadership has not been fully realised. GAP II has had little impact in areas of EU external action traditionally untouched by gender, including trade, energy and migration. In all three countries, there needs to be increased knowledge and commitment within the sectors and amongst those responsible for programming, especially in the priority sectors where large sums of money are directed to government through budget support. There are examples from all three countries of projects and programmes which reflect the priorities outlined in GAP II and where positive change has been experienced by diverse groups of women and men. Projects funded by the EU and Member States and implemented by CSOs are transforming lives, contributing to the achievement of the GAP II objectives. Changes in ideas, practices and beliefs are taking place more slowly, although this study has highlighted some examples of projects which are changing social norms and gender relations at the community level. EU Delegations, Member States and CSOs should coordinate their work with government to change social norms, so that existing laws and policies can be effectively implemented and gender equality achieved. CSOs have the knowledge, expertise and contacts on the ground to engage all sections of the population in a way that is informed by and sensitive to the local context. The EU must promote CSO inclusion at all levels if GAP II is to achieve its goal of transforming the lives of women and girls.

Key recommendations are that the EU should build on the good practice identified in this study to enhance the positive impact of GAP II. The EU should play an active role in bringing about the transformation of gender relations, using its position to influence government and to coordinate partners. The EU must promote CSO inclusion at all levels. Trade agreements should be gender sensitive to ensure that they do not exacerbate existing inequalities or create new ones. Implementation is a pre-condition for impact. GAP II therefore needs to be fully implemented by all actors, including those at a senior level. The final evaluation for GAP II, and the drafting process of GAP III, should highlight enabling factors and markers of change, as this will be the best way to evaluate its impact.

OUR MEMBERS

 NATIONAL PLATFORMS							
							
							
							
							
							
							
							
		 With the support of the European Union				CONCORD is committed to the Code of Conduct on Messages and Images and respects its principles in all publications. Copyright: This work is available under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International license. More info on https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode	