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Matching ambition with reality: HOW THE EU'S GENDER ACTION PLAN FITS INTO THE PROGRAMMING OF ITS EXTERNAL ACTION

GENDER

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The EU's latest Gender Action Plan (GAP III) details how it plans to promote gender equality and women's empowerment internationally. This briefing note compares the EU's ambitions with the reality of GAP III implementation in partner countries.

The implementation of GAP III runs parallel to the programming of EU external action under the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe) for the period 2021-2027. This offers more space to integrate gender and women's empowerment in EU interventions for the coming years. Additional factors that could drive a more thorough implementation of GAP III include the existence of financial commitments towards gender under NDICI-Global Europe, the requirement of EU delegations to formulate detailed GAP III implementation documents, and a stronger monitoring framework.

However, a number of steps are still needed to secure a robust gender perspective in EU development policy and external action in the coming years. The EU institutions will need to take several decisions in the coming months, for instance on finalising the programming documents and detailing their implementation or how to ensure a gendered approach in 'Team Europe' initiatives. The EU will also need to look at its own organisational constraints and strengthen its longer-term engagement with a variety of national stakeholders in partner countries.

Introduction¹

In the last two years, the European Union (EU) stepped up its efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) domestically as well as internationally. This reflects stronger collective political leadership in the EU, despite the conservative stance of some EU member states, such as Poland and Hungary. Political pressure has also increased thanks to the #metoo and Black Lives Matter movements. These movements have raised the bar of expectations on what needs to change, while demonstrating how women's movements are agents of change and leaders in social transformation. In parallel, COVID-19 has laid bare the disproportionate effect of gender inequalities on women or their pre-existing vulnerabilities.

Internationally, the Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 (GAP III), published in December 2020, outlines a forward-looking vision and comprehensive plan of action to make GEWE an integral part of EU external action and development policy (EC 2020a). The GAP III brings a number of innovations compared to its predecessors. It has a more comprehensive approach in terms of thematic areas, integrating for example the Women, Peace and Security agenda and linking gender to the EU high-stakes priorities of green and digital transformations (EC 2020b). Interestingly, the Plan mentions the relevance of tackling gender issues in trade and foreign policy, following in the footsteps of the feminist foreign policy of member states such as France, Luxembourg, Spain and Sweden. The GAP III proposes a three-pronged approach and progressive principles for implementation, namely endorsing a transformational, intersectional and human-rights based approach.

Last but not least, the GAP III spells out some specific provisions for its implementation that include, alongside other measures, setting financial gender targets to be achieved. These apply to the EU's €79.5 billion Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe). This makes for a theoretically strong technical framework that could underpin the political commitment behind it. The coincidence of the

publication of GAP III with the onset of the EU programming of its external resources for the period 2021-2027 has been considered a key factor in ensuring that the GAP III ambitions feature strongly in EU external action in the coming years.

This note looks at the ways in which the GAP III is being integrated into the programming process in practice. This is the first of a short series of briefing notes that analyse EU GAP III implementation. The second note will enquire how the GAP III principles of a transformational, intersectional and human-rights based approach are being interpreted and operationalised. The third one will look at the integration of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the GAP III.

The note builds on some recent work that the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) has done on a similar topic, investigating the GAP III early uptake in Ethiopia, Mali and Mozambique (Teevan et al. 2021). This research is integrated with additional documentary research, updated interviews with EU headquarters and in-country stakeholders in the countries above, and new interviews with stakeholders in South Africa and Nepal. Similarly to that past work, this note follows a bottom-up approach to track how gender is integrated in programming. This is in consideration of the essential role of the EU delegations in enacting the provisions of the GAP III and in programming, and the inevitable country adaptations required for such an agenda.

Overall, the note measures the EU political commitments and ambitions on gender against the reality of programming, a very complex process in which many considerations and priorities need to be balanced with EU capacities and country realities. More specifically, the note looks at 1) how the provisions of the GAP III have been reflected into programming plans so far; 2) the level of buy-in within EU delegations (EUDs) and the EU collaboration with member states and 3) the extent to which the EU takes into account the national context.

The note sketches the status of two dynamic processes that are still in the making at the time of

writing, the final stages of the programming process and the first steps for the GAP III implementation, namely the drafting of the updated Gender Country Profiles and the country-level implementation plans (CLIPs). As such, this note raises some initial questions that will only be answered in the coming months and years and concludes with some recommendations to improve how gender features in EU external action going forward.

1. GAP III and programming: the outlook so far

Alongside the programming process, the GAP III introduces the formulation of CLIPs, now in the making by EUDs. The CLIPs should be based on the updated analysis of new Gender Country Profiles. The CLIPs outline how the EU intends to bring forward its gender commitment under the GAP III in any given context and are an attempt to boost gender mainstreaming in programming.

The CLIPs are an addition to the NDICI-Global Europe's Multiannual Indicative Programmes (MIPs). Drafted earlier in the year and to be finalised by the end of 2021, these documents spell out the EU plans for a specific geography. While the CLIPs, jointly with an updated Gender Country Profile, are the master documents for the EU's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) plans, several interviewees stressed that gender should be strongly reflected also in the MIPs and the more operational Annual Action Plans that follow the MIPs. Programming guidelines require that MIPs are to be built in consultation with national stakeholders to offer a stronger backing to EU gender action at the level of planning and implementation. Section 4 of this note will look at how this requirement has been put in practice so far.

Ensuring a strong gender perspective in programming documents is a crucial first step to realise the ambitious goals of the newly established regulation of the NDICI-Global Europe and of the GAP III. Under the NDICI-Global Europe, 85% of actions should have a gender component and 5% of those actions will need to have gender as a principal objective (EU 2021).

The programming guidelines of the NDICI-Global Europe and GAP III require that at least one project per country should have gender as a principal objective. The latter is a new feature that gives the chance to allocate specific resources to gender, resources that in the past often had to be found in other envelopes, for example under the European Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy for 2014-2020. Targeted actions are especially important in light of the difficulty to allocate specific funding for GEWE globally.

The current quantitative targets of the NDICI-Global Europe are a reiteration of the past targets the EU struggled to meet before the 2020 deadline. A thorough assessment of the quality of EU spending on gender in EU external action is not available. Still, some of the findings on EU spending of a past Evaluation of the EU's External Action Support to Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment for 2010-2018 resonate with the findings of our recent research (Teevan et al. 2021; ECA 2021). Namely, the evaluation highlights that gender mainstreaming has been especially weak due to a lack of a strategic vision at country level, an uneven understanding of gender mainstreaming and a mismatch between ambitions and resources. Our research suggests that some of these bottlenecks are still present at the level of EU delegations. Some EUDs have a stronger vision and expertise on gender that helps with mainstreaming gender better at the stage of programming while other EUDs are weaker.

The Evaluation calls for better measures to implement mainstreaming that overall aims to improve the quality of spending, coordination among different actors, synergies across actions and better monitoring. Building on this, the GAP III aims to strengthen implementation of mainstreaming commitments. The Plan, for example, requires the update of Gender Country Profiles to underpin the CLIPs. These documents should be developed in collaboration with the EU member states as much as possible and be part of the risk, vulnerability and conflict assessments in the case of fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The GAP III also calls for the use of gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated data for Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) and requires to justify actions that do not make

a contribution to gender equality in EU external action.

Overall, the 85% target has been received positively by the consulted EUDs, but their self-assessment of how well placed each delegation is in contributing to the target varies. While the goal applies to all spending and not to individual country programmes, delegations feel some pressure to deliver against the target. On the one hand, some expressed concerns on its achievability. On the other hand, some delegations expressed the desire to surpass the target.

2. The CLIPs: a tool to raise the gender agenda at country level

The CLIPs process has been designed to increase buy-in for the gender agenda at institutional level in the EU. EU top officials have expressed strong support for this agenda, for example through a joint letter from Koen Doens, the Director General of DG INTPA and Stefano Sannino, Secretary General of the European External Action Service (EEAS) on the relevance of the GAP III for EU external action. However, leadership is crucial at different levels of the EU hierarchy and especially in delegations, where the level of engagement and capacity on gender issues vary greatly.

At the moment of writing, several CLIPs have been submitted to the EU institutions headquarters but some are still being developed and are at a drafting stage. While it is still too early to ascertain the extent to which they have succeeded in lifting the gender flag higher among EU staff, some interviewees suggested that the exercise did trigger an internal reflection on gender that otherwise may not have happened. In some cases, the CLIP has been signed by the Head of Delegation, giving a higher profile to the document.

CLIPs should be the result of a collective effort across the whole of EUDs including operational, political, and where present, trade sections, etc. But the application of this varies to a great extent. In EUDs in Mozambique and Nepal, where there is a strong, pre-existing commitment to gender, early evidence

suggests CLIPs have been formulated delegation-wide. In others, gender focal points, who usually take the lead on the development of the CLIPs, may struggle to involve other colleagues in the process because they do not have the necessary backing.

The preparation of the updated Gender Country Profiles has been led often by external consultants due to capacity constraints or to build upon, for example, external expertise on how to input a gender lens in specific sectors of intervention. There may be other reasons to outsource the drafting of these documents. In the case of Mozambique, the profile is co-led with UN Women and in the context of a EU-led gender group called the Gender and Citizens group, that brings together EU and EU member states gender focal points. The idea is to lend the legitimacy of a UN agency to the profile to increase buy-in from the national authorities and other stakeholders.

While understandable, the use of external consultants can hamper much-needed capacity-building of expertise on GEWE in EUDs. This point has been frequently raised also in the past, when the practice to outsource gender work to external consultants or help-desks was more frequent than today. Responding to these concerns, the gender team of the EU's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) has put in place several opportunities for training for gender focal points as well as other EU staff. Other sessions have targeted EU member states representatives and dealt with the gender dimensions of the Green Deal and the EU digital agenda. Most delegations contacted for this study felt supported in their efforts to instil a gender perspective in future programming by the training, information and feedback provided by the gender team at DG INTPA. Still, one felt that training did not match their needs and that expectations of what could be achieved at country level were too high in EU headquarters. Training is a valuable tool but putting in place the right incentives and culture will be as important to ensure that this investment pays off in terms of capacity development and results on the ground.

An additional concern is that some Gender Country Profiles tend to focus on women only, rather than look at the power relations that lead to gender inequality.

In addition, while these documents are intended to lay down the analysis for MIPs and CLIPs, some have been prepared afterwards. Such sequencing raises questions about the extent to which the MIPs and CLIPs were prepared with a nuanced and updated understanding of context.

3. Working together with member states

The integration of GAP III and programming should happen in concert with the EU member states. Two important factors influence member states' involvement in gender issues. On the one hand, the EU has put in place processes to involve member states through its delegations. On the other hand, the level of member states' engagement is also defined by the level of prioritisation that they give to gender and their internal capacities. While member states have appreciated the fact that the GAP III and the draft MIPs were presented to them, some question the influence they have on the final documents.

Some member states mentioned their frustration with reporting under the previous GAP II, when they submitted their reporting but had no feedback from the EU institutions afterwards. They hope that under GAP III they will receive feedback on their own reporting and that there will be a more articulated process to link reporting to improved results on the

ground. While the details on the GAP III monitoring and reporting are still being worked out, there are some positive developments in this regard.

Quantitative annual reporting on the GAP III will be complemented by more qualitative reporting and a mid-term review in 2023 that will cover outcomes and impact. Member states are now involved in the setting up of these reporting mechanisms at headquarter level. On their side, delegations are working to strengthen the use of gender-sensitive indicators as part of the monitoring mechanisms of their programmes for 2021-2027.

An additional concern of member states at country level is the extent to which MIPs incorporate a gender lens in the different objectives. CLIPs and MIPs should be mutually integrated into, with the CLIPs elaborating the details of how actions under the MIPs will take gender into account and the MIPs consistently offering a gendered perspective to EU actions based on the Gender Country Profiles and the CLIPs. In practice, the formulation of the CLIPs and MIPs run in parallel and some CLIPs do take MIPs priority areas into account while others do not. Some member states at country level and the INTPA gender team in the Headquarters have provided feedback on the MIPs to improve the focus on gender. But the extent to which these comments will be integrated in the final stages of the MIPs, to be finalised by the end of 2021, remains to be seen.

Box 1: The integration of CLIPs and MIPs in different contexts

Delegations like Mozambique and Nepal are confident of the substantive linkages between MIPs and CLIPs, both in terms of mainstreaming and when it comes to projects that have gender as their principal objective. In the case of Mozambique, the CLIP has been shared with development partners and is at the drafting stage. The MIP will focus on green transformation, youth and governance and a stand-alone programme on gender-based violence that will build on the Spotlight Initiative. For Nepal, gender mainstreaming will be strong across the board, including notably in programmes on water and sanitation, and climate change and energy, with projects run in collaboration with Finland and Germany respectively. According to one interviewee, the drafting of the CLIP opened some space for a collective reflection on how to take a transformational approach in Nepal.

In other contexts, the integration between CLIPs and MIPs may not be as strong or the EUD is still too early in the process of formulation of the CLIP for them or member states to assess the state of play. Mali, for example, has approached programming and the CLIP as two separate processes. The country has a joint programming document whose priorities are a functioning of the state, sustainable economic growth and human capital. Gender is mentioned as a transversal priority. The CLIP's areas are participation of women, their integrity and women empowerment.

South Africa's MIP focuses on three areas: green agenda; inequalities; and partnerships, including the role of South Africa as a regional actor and the Women Peace and Security. All three areas have a gender perspective. The EUD is still defining which stand-

alone project with gender as a primary objective to put in place. The CLIP for South Africa is based on the GAP III areas rather than MIP priority areas, namely on freedom from all forms of gender-based violence; economic and social rights; WPS; and the green transition and the digital transformation.

The Country Gender Profile for Ethiopia was the main input for the CLIP and its sectoral focus. The MIP mainstreams gender and the preparation of the Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs); one on job creation and one on digital development, which included a gender-sensitive analysis. However, some member states raised concerns that gender could be lost as a cross-cutting priority of the MIP and that the document did not reflect the GAP III principles enough.

The Team Europe initiatives (TEIs) and preference for joint programming under the NDICI-Global Europe offer some impetus for the EU and member states to work together on gender (Jones and Teevan 2021). TEIs are high visibility initiatives that aim to involve the EU institutions, EU member states and the European financing institutions for development. Mainstreaming gender in TEIs will require more leadership and the availability of adequate sectoral expertise, for example around digital, energy, green, and economic development. It will be important to ensure that TEIs mainstream gender adequately (Veron and Sergejeff 2021; Chadwick 2021). Ethiopia offers a creditable example. European gender focal points, part of an EU-led Gender Task Force, have initiated analytical preparatory studies to ensure a strong gender perspective in their TEIs collaboration. If maintained throughout planning and implementation - and that is where Delegations often struggle - these efforts will enhance the gender equality outcomes in Ethiopia. However, an interviewee suggested that the priority areas of the MIP would offer more space to work collaboratively with member states on gender.

The GAP III reflects the perspectives and approaches of member states as well but its adoption by them varies. In general, national documents and guidelines, specific to gender or not, tend to take precedence over EU documents in their bilateral cooperation. In addition, member states often seek visibility and results of their bilateral cooperation, a factor that disincentivises collaboration under the EU banner. The leadership that some EU countries lend to the gender agenda and how it translates from capitals to country contexts matter greatly for their engagement with the GAP III processes and the EU gender agenda. Countries like Ireland, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands prioritise gender and have been mentioned as countries that engage more also at

country level compared to other member states. Still, this translation from commitments at the level of capitals to country-level work is not a given as capacities and prioritisation at the operational level can differ and mechanisms to ensure this translation may not be in place.

The engagement of EU member states on gender can strengthen the EU institutions' own drive to follow through with this agenda: for example, in the case of Nepal, the EU gender focal point is co-chairing the Gender Equality Development Partners Group jointly with Norway and UN Women, also thanks to the push from Finland who previously covered the same role. Similarly, Finland is a leading force in the adoption of a transformative approach in the country, in line with the GAP III principles. For member states that do not prioritise gender as much, even highly committed staff can struggle to push the gender agenda forward.

Coordination platforms can be a basis for information exchange and some degree of collaboration among the EU institutions and member states. They also can help to frame common political messages on the most relevant issues that affect gender in the country. CLIPs and the progressive detailing of future plans under the 2021-2027 EU budget offer an opportunity to improve this, as the case of Nepal shows. Still, this would require intentional efforts as, in the past, EUDs have struggled to bring together the member states and frame joint strategic initiatives, despite their growing interest in gender equality. These platforms can pull together expertise and resources and raise the profile of the European actors on gender. To achieve these aims, adequate expertise and political backing by European capitals and senior local diplomats is essential, along with the indispensable legitimacy at the local level.

In Ethiopia, Mali, and Mozambique, countries ECDPM recently analysed, different levels of coordination

exist. In Ethiopia, a donor coordination mechanism exists on health issues that also includes gender aspects and involves some EU member states on a bilateral capacity. In Mozambique, the EU Gender and citizens group brings together the EU and member states gender focal points with the intent to collectively push the GAP III forward. In addition, recently the EU became co-chair of the Coalition of the willing gender-focused group jointly with Canada, a wider group of development partners in which some EU member states take part. In Mali, gender is discussed in groups that deal with wider issues such as a subgroup within a donors' thematic group on Inclusive and Sustainable Economy. Gender is also discussed on ad-hoc occasions, especially when of interest to some EU member states.²

4. Gender and the national context

The GAP III widens the gender agenda to broader foreign policy, including, amongst others, development cooperation, trade, peace and security, digital transition and climate change. In parallel, it puts a lot of emphasis on political dialogue as a means to foster gender equality at the country level and ensure that it is addressed in an integrated manner within EU external relations. While these are welcome moves, realising their full potential at service of GEWE objectives can be very challenging. Despite a rising prominence, gender is still seen as a topic of lesser importance in political dialogue. In the countries analysed in our past research, the general sense was that this leg of the GAP III needs to be reinforced going forward. Gender was sometimes included in political and sectoral dialogues - for example with Mozambique on women, peace and security, and in Ethiopia on health. Interestingly, in Mali the point was made that informal occasions can be a more frequent and valuable tool to deploy to raise the issue, along with less frequent and more formalised political dialogue opportunities.

The MIPs and the CLIPs are required to be formulated in consultation with national authorities and civil society. The programming guidelines require a list of consulted civil society organisations (CSOs) to be provided. The quality of this engagement is variable. Official authorities and civil society active in the realm of gender equality recently consulted in the

preparation of the MIPs or for the update of CSO roadmaps have raised two issues. Firstly, line ministries with a responsibility on gender lament that they are often marginalised in these discussions (as well as in political and policy dialogue) in favour of more powerful and much better resources ministries, such as those of finance or foreign affairs. However, engaging with more powerful ministries while working closely with those with a dedicated mandate for gender is important. Such dialogues can strengthen the case for GEWE in parts of governments that make or influence very relevant budgetary and policy decisions and help gender ministries to gain more recognition and leverage to follow through their mandate.

Secondly, CSOs feel that they would like to be more meaningfully involved. Sometimes the aim of consultations is hard to read and they would like to receive feedback on whether their perspectives have been taken into account. On their side, some CSOs admit that they need core support, capacity and expertise to engage with complex bureaucratic processes. The preparation of the CLIPs happened in consultation with these actors in most cases, usually through requests for feedback on early drafts. Nepal went further and conducted a host of activities in preparation of the drafting of the CLIPs. CLIPs have also benefited from earlier consultations and dialogues, for example those that happened under the programming process and in preparation of the CSOs roadmap in Mozambique and of the CSOs roadmap of Mali.

Engagement with local actors on gender issues specifically – as opposed to wider consultations and relationships - can offer a more focused commentary on this particular topic. An example is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) organisations, gender champions and change agents, and women-led organisations that are at a disadvantage due to their remote location outside of a country's main cities. Dealing with, or even discussing, LGBTQI+ issues are particularly sensitive in several contexts. Going forward, the framing of EU programmes, joint initiatives with EU member states (including TEIs) and their implementation can offer additional channels of engagement.

5. Conclusions

Our research has detected a desire to change pace in the way the EU promotes gender equality internationally in EUDs as well as in some of the EU member states, spurred on by the high priority given to gender equality by the EU institutions, and the openings created by increased social awareness around this issue. The bolder and more comprehensive approach of the GAP III offers an ambitious plan and the belated appointment of the new EU Special Advisor on Gender and Diversity is a good first step towards more cross-institutional collaboration in the EU.

The full implementation of the GAP III calls for a systematic change for the EU to meet its own high ambitions. Past assessments point to **the need to scale up leadership, expertise and resources** if the EU is serious about realising its agenda and being a significant actor for gender equality globally. Additional challenges arise from path dependency on how EUDs deal with country actors and how the EU deals with its own bureaucratic processes. Some member states and civil society raised the additional concern that the Council of the European Union was not able to reach Council conclusions on the GAP III, a document which was issued as Conclusions from the Presidency of the Council instead. The GAP III envisions measures to tackle some of these known bottlenecks and following through on those provisions will be a challenging, as well as an essential, step.

Integration between the Gender Country Profiles, the CLIPs and the MIPs (or other programming documents such as joint programming documents) can lead to a stronger implementation of the GAP III. This integration has proved challenging in the case of some EUDs and the train may have departed already in some cases. Still, other EUDs used the formulation of these documents in a more strategic way and in some cases there is still time for integration, since CLIPs are still reaching the EU headquarters and the deadline to agree the MIPs is end of this year. Comments from the DG INTPA Gender Team and from member states on both documents that aim to strengthen the gender angle in EU plans should be taken into account.

Going forward, it will be important to **insert a strong gender perspective also in the EU Annual action plans and programmes and build internal EU gender capacity and awareness.** A number of valuable efforts have been already made for a stronger integration of GEWE objectives in the future of EU external action, exploiting the opportunities given by the coincidence of the programming of EU external resources for 2021-2027 and the planning for the implementation of the GAP III. In addition, the formulation of the CLIPs seems to have triggered a reflection on gender beyond the Gender focal points and those already committed to gender in EUDs.

The GAP III envisions incentives for staff such as performance assessment, improved reporting and support measures such as training and knowledge sharing. **The EU leadership at all levels should ensure that the GAP III provisions are followed through consistently and that they match the needs or personnel in delegations,** building on what DG INTPA has already done. The practice of the EU delegation in Nepal where all colleagues must take at least one training every year on gender issues could provide an example to replicate elsewhere.

Reporting on the GAP III will play an important role to provide incentives to staff. The ongoing work to ensure a solid and credible set of gender-sensitive indicators as part of EU programmes for 2021-2027 is crucial. The intention to combine quantitative annual reporting with a mid-term review in 2023 that will cover quantitative and qualitative aspects as well as outcomes and impact is also very well placed. Last time around, the EU struggled to meet its gender financial targets. The political leadership behind the GAP III and its provisions for implementation (e.g. monitoring mechanisms) and its coincidence with the programming process seem to offer a more conducive environment than in the past to achieve these financial goals and improve the quality of EU spending.

Collaboration among EU member states on gender should be pursued as much as possible. Such collaboration depends on several contextual factors that this study has encountered but not analysed with the due depth. There is scope for further research in this direction that could provide valuable policy insights on how to ensure that commitments

to gender at the level of EU capitals are translated at country level, how to ensure that gender work is not undermined by other, more pressing, priorities and how to foster European collaboration on gender equality, including along the lines of the GAP III.

Team Europe Initiatives seem to be an obvious opportunity to harness in this regard because of the political stakes that come with them, namely the desire to give visibility to Europe-wide action and build up the profile of the EU as a global leader. TEIs will attract sizable resources. Therefore, achieving the 85% gender target may be hard if TEIs do not address it. At the moment, however, there is no information on how TEIs will give due to consideration to gender.³ **This should be a key point of attention of member states and EU institutions in the validation process.**

Our research points to **the need to strengthen engagement with national stakeholders on gender all across, from ministries with a dedicated mandate to civil society to, pressingly, policy and political dialogue.** In the instances analysed in this research, the EU has often struggled to have a sustained policy

dialogue on gender, either as a topic of its own or as part of wider political and policy dialogues. It has also struggled to meaningfully engage with line ministries with a gender mandate and with civil society, because of its own limitations and of the constraints of its counterparts. Still, the emphasis of the GAP III on a three-pronged approach that contemplates targeted actions, mainstreaming and policy dialogue is very well placed as well as the aim to have a more comprehensive outlook beyond development cooperation and should be pursued with conviction.

This research happens at a moment in which none of the programming steps or the GAP III implementation processes are complete. Information in the public domain is still limited and some of the interviewees, while generous in their remarks, admitted that where these processes will ultimately land is beyond their knowledge at this stage. While we still feel this note offers useful insights, there is a benefit in further research that could track these processes consistently, starting from the end of this year and well into the next.

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Endnotes

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- ² The previous report highlighted that one challenge for both Mozambique and Mali is the plethora of donor groups that deal with gender to different degrees and the difficulty to identify which of those bear more legitimacy towards the national authorities and are of a strategic nature.
- ³ TEIs will focus on EU priorities. Green transformation, and growth and jobs account for the lion's share of country TEIs, followed by digital transition. Migration will be dealt with regionally. Human development, governance and peace, including gender, will be mainstreamed.

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