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EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



The Director-General



Secretary General

## **Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025** **Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP *Nepal***

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

Nepal's 2015 Constitution promotes equality and inclusiveness, and vows to eliminate discrimination based on class, caste, ethnicity, region, language, religion, and gender. It sets the tone for the existing strong legal framework and policy commitments for gender equality and social inclusion. This includes gender and representation quotas for all elected positions, the criminalisation of gender based violence, harmful practices, and caste based discrimination, recognition of indigenous peoples<sup>1</sup> and of LGBTIQ+ people<sup>2</sup>, and the recent Gender Equality Strategy 2020 of the Government of Nepal, among others.

Despite this progressive framework, there are distinct gender disparities in Nepal; and women lag behind men in all sectors. Nepal ranks 106<sup>th</sup> out of 156 countries in the 2021 Global Gender Gap index, and 118<sup>th</sup> out of 160 countries in the Gender Inequality index 2017. These disparities are compounded with inequalities across the seven Provinces and social groups such as caste and ethnic groups, religious minorities, people with disabilities and non-conforming gender identities. Low budget priorities, weak capacities for implementation of laws, enduring social norms devaluing women and harmful cultural practices are barriers to achieve gender equality.

In addition to the two global challenges of climate change and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, Nepal's two overarching development challenges are to deliver on the federalisation process launched with the new Constitution in 2015, and to finalise graduation<sup>3</sup> from Least Developed Country by 2026. They both provide clear opportunities for a gender transformative approach.

Nepal's ongoing transition to a federal Republic offers opportunities at the three levels of government (federal, provincial and municipal). Firstly, the quota system for women and marginalised communities has ensured their official representation and participation in great numbers at all levels, bringing more than 14,000 women into public office including over 5000 Dalit, and with 41% of women elected at the local level<sup>4</sup>. Even though most women are in the Deputy Mayor position (98%) instead of Mayor, and that some report difficulty in asserting themselves or making themselves heard<sup>5</sup>, there is now a critical mass of women having had

<sup>1</sup> Nepal, is the only country in Asia to have ratified the ILO Indigenous Peoples Convention 169

<sup>2</sup> LGBTIQ+ people are recognised in the Constitution

<sup>3</sup> Nepal will fulfill conditions to graduate from the LDC category by the end of 2021. Because of the challenges posed by the C-19 pandemic and based on the request of Nepal, the normal preparatory period of 3 years has been extended to 5. This means that even if the graduation happens by the end of 2021, Nepal will continue to have access to all LDC-specific support measures until 2026.

<sup>5</sup> Video of elected women talking about their experiences: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03fTOflk2bU>

experience in leadership positions that Nepal can capitalise on, with the upcoming local elections of 2022. Secondly, the establishment of 753 local governments means that proximity to governments by women and marginalised groups should enable their needs being taken into account in planning processes. Last, but not least, the reform also concerns Public Finance Management Systems, with planning and budgeting currently done at the three levels of government, which include a Gender Responsive Budgeting methodology. These opportunities will be harnessed primarily through Priority Area 3 “Governance” of the EU’s Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP).

The Graduation from Least Developed Country hinges on growing Nepal’s economy and increasing GDP per capita. However, macroeconomic policies target women from a welfare approach, rather than treating them as active drivers of economic growth. Women are disproportionately represented in the informal sector and home-based workers, and women’s labour is undervalued. The unpaid household and care work performed almost exclusively by women is not accounted for. Women participate in cooperatives but are not sufficiently represented in decision-making bodies. There is a clear opportunity in accounting for the value of women’s work, increasing their earnings, and improving the working conditions and opportunities of the informal sector, specifically in green sectors. In addition, women have a preponderant role in agriculture and forestry, which has increased even further with male migration,<sup>6</sup> and which targeted in the Inclusive Green Growth priority Area 1 of the MIP. This priority will also tackle equal access to clean energy and to water and sanitation, improving access to productive technologies such as irrigation, and reducing the time burden of fetching water for women and girls.

Last, but not least, in order to achieve resilient, inclusive growth, socioeconomic outcomes and safety nets must be improved. Priority Area 2 of the MIP will deliver on inclusive quality education, including basic education and TVET linked to green growth sectors, and nutrition, focusing on adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and their children, leaving no one behind.

The analysis and plan of the present CLIP rely on several sources: i) the Gender Country Profile (GCP, EU 2021) and its literature review of relevant and recent publications on gender, 2) the conflict sensitivity analysis, 3) an online survey conducted in June 2021 aiming at gender practitioners from among government, development partners, I/NGOs, feminists and women activists; 4) several consultations with civil society, 5) a workshop with gender practitioners on July specifically on 3 GAP III priorities, including women human rights defenders and local authorities, 6) interviews with key informants, including the Ministry of Women, Senior Citizens and the National Planning Commission, Development partners and UN Agencies, 7) regular meetings with Member states , and 8) lessons learnt from the implementation of EU funded projects integrating gender issues.

## **2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives**

Following the analysis conducted in the GCP in terms of needs and opportunities for Nepal, cross-referenced with the areas of existing EU support and EU added value, the three most relevant areas of engagement of the GAP III for Nepal are:

- i) Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender based violence (AE1),
- ii) Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women (AE3), and
- iii) Promoting equal participation and leadership (AE4).

Other specific thematic objectives are also taken into account when relevant. The MIP for Nepal promotes a territorial, integrated approach, where the three priorities are interlinked and support the

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<sup>6</sup> Before COVID-19, about 4.5 million Nepalis, mostly men, were working outside of Nepal

achievement of each other's outcomes, and supporting local governance processes, which will in turn promote the new federal structure. In the same vein, the three areas of engagement of the GAP III will also be weaved into the three priorities, striving for a transformative approach. Increased knowledge and data driven decision making will be promoted: three gender analyses to support implementation of the AAPs 2021 and 2022 (nutrition, forestry and WASH) will start in late 2021 and funding for further studies analyses is foreseen in AAP 2021.

The MIP Priority area 1 "Inclusive Green Growth" will support the efforts at local level to achieve a green economy, green jobs and sustainable growth in Nepal's natural resource-based sectors, thereby supporting Nepal's LDC's graduation efforts. This priority will work on the following sectors: clean energy, agro-forestry and WASH, by promoting access to services, ecosystem management, afforestation measures and green enterprise and job development. The specific thematic objectives of the GAP III that will be pursued by concrete actions will be, for AE3: *"Access to entrepreneurship, including alternative livelihoods, green and circular economy"*, *"Decent work, formal economy and coverage by non-discriminatory and inclusive social protection systems"*, *"Improved access to safe water and sanitation facilities"*, and *"Access to financial services and products, and productive resources"*. It will also promote AE6 *"Increased participation in decision-making processes on environment and climate change issues"*.

The MIP priority area 2 "Human Capital Development" will strengthen the resilience of Nepal's society and economy by investing primarily in youth development and supporting the infrastructure and services that boost poverty reduction and sustainable development. The sectors covered are basic education, emphasizing quality, equitable and inclusive access, and ensuring that the "COVID gap" and 'Equity Gap' is reduced; TVET, linked to green growth sectors promoted in priority 1, and nutrition, with multi-sector interventions. The Actions funded by this priority will contribute to the following specific thematic objectives: for AE3, *"Reduction in gender disparities in enrolment, progression and retention at all levels of education and lifelong learning"*, *"Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, have improved nutrition levels"*.

"Good Governance" is priority area 3 of the MIP, and it will consolidate peace by promoting equity and by supporting federal, provincial and local level governance and strengthen state institutions, to ensure inclusive, transparent and accountable governments, combined with support to Civil Society to ensure inclusivity and citizens' oversight. The sectors covered are Government and Civil Society, working on PFM and Gender Responsive Budgeting, accountability, rule of law, gender equality, including ending gender based violence, and access to justice at local level. The Specific thematic objectives this priority will contribute to , with its actions, are: for AE1, *"Legislation and effective enforcement"*, *"Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity agents of change"*, *"Increased access to essential services"*, *"CSOs, Women's rights organisations, social movements are influential in ending GBV"*, and for AE4, *"Enabling conditions for equal participation in decision-making"*, *"Improved systems for collecting quality, disaggregated and globally comparable data on women's political participation and leadership"*, and *"Equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours promoting equal participation and leadership fostered at community and individual levels"*.

These objectives are shared with Member States, and several actions are or could be co-financed and/or implemented by Member States present in the country (Finland, France and Germany). These include Actions on WASH and education (Finland), energy (Germany, EIB), and agro-forestry (Germany, Finland, EIB). Member States take a very active role on dialogue in Gender Equality.

Civil society is included in the design, implementation and monitoring of the actions; civic engagement is promoted, with a special focus on youth as agents of change.

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

In order to match the ambitions of the GAP III and Nepal's MIP, the first targeted action supporting gender equality and women's empowerment with a Gender Marker G2, "Empowered Women, Prosperous Nepal" is part of Nepal's Annual Action Plan 2021 (AAP), setting a strong framework for the whole MIP, creating robust synergies with the three priority areas, facilitating the policy dialogue on the GEWE agenda, and promoting EU's convening power and leadership, in partnership with Member States and the UN.

To counter the major challenge of sectoral silos and programmatic fragmentation in GEWE programming, this action combines the GAP III thematic areas of engagement of the MIP (freedom from GBV, socioeconomic rights and empowering girls and women, and equal participation and leadership) into an integrated action, with joint targeting, delivery and monitoring, and supporting a transformative approach in the three priority areas of the MIP.

The overall objective of the action is to contribute to the full realisation of Nepalese women and girls' human rights and socio-economic agency and help unlock their potential. The action seeks to address key drivers of gender inequality in Nepal through an integrated gender transformative approach. The results are:

- (1) Ensuring women/girls in all their diversity, are safe, valued and have increased voice, choice and control to challenge/transform harmful social norms; the action will deliver on freedom from all forms of gender based violence, supporting prevention through norm and behaviour change, ensuring an integrated, multi-sectoral response to victims, and also focus on workplace safety and dignity.
- (2) Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, fully enjoy and exercise their equal economic, labour and social rights; the action will promote decent work, economic opportunities in the green economy, leadership in local platforms and comprehensive access to multi-sector essential services such as social protection
- (3) Institutions deliver gender equality outcomes in all spheres, in line with international and national normative frameworks; the action will strengthen the capacity of the National Women's machinery, support the three levels of government to effect evidence based policies supporting GEWE, and support civil society, youth and women's networks, to engage in civic dialogue.

Several indicators are aligned with those of the EU RF and the GAP III: *"Extent to which women's rights organisations, and women human rights defenders are able to work undeterred"*; *"Percentage of working population (by type of employment, disaggregated by sex and sector)"*; *"Number of persons accessing essential services and social protection measures (type of service, gender, age, ability)"*; *"Extent to which the GoN is compliant with international human rights commitments"*; *"Number of laws and policies where recommendations made by WRO/youth organizations have been taken on board by government bodies at all levels during the drafting or revision process, with support of the programme"*.

The foreseen amount of the action is 22.200.000 euros, with an EU contribution of 15.500.000 euros. Finland and the UN also contribute financially, with estimated amounts of 2.500.000 and 4.200.000 euros respectively, to be confirmed. The action is a strategic partnership of the EU and Member States with the UN.

The action will support directly the National Women Machinery, and work with women organisations and other organisations working on gender equality as implementing partners. The action will also support storytelling as a tool for measuring behaviour and norm change. If the

evaluations and monitoring are positive, a second phase of the programme to continue policy gains is possible.

#### **4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment**

The Action “*Empowered Women, Prosperous Nepal*” aims to organise an annual high level policy dialogue with the three tiers of government (federal, provincial and local), as well as with civil society, with a focus on women’s organisations and youth organisations, ensuring the participation of Nepali women in all their diversity (caste, religion, ethnicity, indigenous status, disability, etc.). The areas of engagement will be primarily the three priorities set forth in the programme; however these can be complemented with issues that are timely or relevant to the timing of the dialogue. Member States will be included in the dialogue. The annual dialogue will be complemented with more frequent discussions with local governments, in particular.

An ongoing call for proposals focusing on Youth includes, in the design of the actions, a dedicated activity for a Youth Sounding Board to engage dialogue with a representative intersection of Nepali youth for the period 2021-2024; gender equality will be an important part of the discussions. The periodicity and modalities will be set by the end of 2021. This dialogue will be extended for a systematic follow up of the issues defined in the CSO Roadmap. The EU Delegation engagement with CSOs in designing, implementing and monitoring of any EU initiatives in Nepal, and the annual Joint Commissions held with the Government of Nepal will be specific opportunities for regular dialogue on GEWE.

#### **5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities**

The EU has set aside a specific budget for communication and public diplomacy in the action “*Empowered Women, Prosperous Nepal*”, which will complement the specific communication activities of the programme. This budget will be complemented with support measures, to support, amongst other initiatives, the EU Gender Champion programme started in 2018, where EU Ambassadors rotate the role and ensure activities promoting GEWE. Promotion of GEWE will be part of the next Communication Strategy of the Delegation (2022), and activities will be defined then. International days relating to GEWE will be marked, such as IWD, IDAHOT and 16 days of activism.

For non-resident MS, the EU Delegation will promote and propose visiting EU Ambassadors residing in Delhi activities highlighting GEWE action.

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

Funds have been earmarked for the gender sector analyses needed in 2021 and 2022, through existing contracts; the action “*Empowered Women, Prosperous Nepal*” also has set aside 150.000 EUR for technical assistance to support mainstreaming in the MIP. These will be pooled with the financial resources foreseen in the support measures of the MIP. In order to increase internal capacity of the Delegation, all staff must do one Gender related training per year; completion is monitored.

Finland has Gender Equality as one of its 3 development priorities, and will support gender transformative approaches in its support on the WASH and education sectors (in partnership with the EU). They will also contribute to the G2 programme, and support UN Women with core funding.

*Date: 06/08/2021*

*Signature by Head of Delegation:* Nona DEPREZ (e-signed)