

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
AND DEVELOPMENT

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



The Director-General



Secretary General

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

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

Pakistan lags behind on global gender equality: it is ranked third to last in the latest Global Gender Gap Index (2021) at 153/156. The country is faring particularly badly on the categories of economic participation and opportunity, and health and survival, where it features among the bottom ten countries. Educational attainment remains a concern with female literacy rate as low as 51.8%.

Pakistan has national and international commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment and has put in place an overtly impressive legal, policy and institutional architecture. The slow pace of implementation of these commitments is the real challenge. This is due in part to limited institutional capacity, weak planning and inadequate budgets as well as lack of political will and opposition from religious parties and extremists.

Pakistan is signatory to Human Rights Conventions (including CEDAW) and adopted the 2030 SDGs which are integrated in the national development agenda. A gender roadmap proposing integration across national policies is under discussion. The Constitution guarantees equality of citizenship and several articles uphold the principle of gender equality. While some laws discriminate against women (family and inheritance) progressive legislations were introduced to protect women's socioeconomic and legal rights¹. Their implementation and monitoring, however, pose problems.

Gender equality in Pakistan remains particularly weak on economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, and health and survival.² Key areas of concern for the EU include:

Widespread sexualised violence against women. It is prevalent across class, age, region, religion and ethnicity. Pakistan rates as the third most dangerous country for women in the world³ and ranks 150/153 countries on the Women, Peace and Security Index.⁴ Rape is underreported and goes largely unpunished (of 22,000 cases reported in the last 6 years only 18% made it to prosecution and 0.3% led to a conviction⁵).

¹ 2016 Women Protection Act; 2011 Prevention of Anti-women Practices; Child Marriage Restraint Acts; 2010 Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act; 2010 Prevention against Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act; 2017 Election Act; 2020 Enforcement of Women's Property Rights (Amendment) Bill; 2017 Hindu Marriage Act; Enactment of Domestic Violence Acts (in all provinces except Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).

² EU-Pakistan Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy 2021-2025

³ In the poll of experts, conducted by Thomson Reuters Foundation.

⁴ Prepared by Georgetown Institute

⁵ Data from the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan

Limited access to socio-economic empowerment, which disproportionately affects women living in poverty and/or who are vulnerable. Female labor force participation stands at 22% - one of the lowest rates in South Asia. Around 70% of women are in the informal sector (66% in agriculture) with little or no protection. The rate of unemployment and wage gap is higher amongst female workers. The majority do not receive a minimum wage. Key determinants for low participation include lack of education and marketable skills⁶, childcare/domestic work responsibility, restrictions on mobility and vertical and horizontal occupational segregation. The gender gap is more pronounced in jobs requiring higher skills: 25 % of technical roles are held by women. Harassment in public spaces including transport and sexual harassment at the workplace is common, which create barriers for women to advance professionally.

Lack of access to productive resources. Nationally, less than 2% of adult women own a house or land, and women receive only 19% of disbursement of MSME financing. Only 11% of women have bank accounts, compared with 21% of men⁷. Representation of women in formal SMEs is low - only 6% of firms have female ownership and 2% of them have women-only employers (of a total 3.2 million enterprises in Pakistan).

Low coverage of civil registration. This hampers access to inheritance, banking services, education, health care, social protection services and justice, particularly for women. It also impacts on electoral registration. In addition, lack of data on women and girls hinders efforts to increase gender equality and to design evidence-based policies that can lift the constraints that hold women and girls back.

Gender inequality in Pakistan should however not be understood from the prism of indices only. The transformation to a gender equal society started at a very low level and improvements can be measured, e.g. women literacy rate rose from 12.20% (1951) to 51.8% (2020); there is no gender gap in higher education; women's participation in the workforce is increasing; the average marriage age rose from 16 (1961) to 26.1 (2010); fertility rate decreased from 6.6 children (1960) to 3.6 (2018); the number of women taking civil service exams quadrupled from 10% (1984) to 40% (2017); gender quota policy in politics has improved women's representation in the national assembly from 0.9% (1990) to 20.2% (2018). An increasing number of women are claiming inheritance rights, contesting gender norms, asserting their autonomy by making marriage and career choices and withdrawing from violent relationships.

Despite this, lack of adequate institutions and data⁸ coupled with weak coordination mechanisms hamper the possibility to have a comprehensive picture of these improvements. Going forward, more accurate statistics and monitoring capacities is considered essential for a more comprehensive and informative overview of development.

The UN system is fully present in Pakistan but they have not developed a joint gender country plan. UN Women leads actions on women's empowerment and gender equality with a focus on socioeconomic rights and political empowerment. There are various CSOs/NGOs targeting programmes on women empowerment and gender equality.⁹

In 2020, the EU Delegation to Pakistan commissioned a comprehensive Gender Analysis to provide an overview of the current state of play to guide new priority areas under the MIP 2021-2027 and inform political and policy dialogue. The selection of thematic areas and objectives of the CLIP was developed on this basis. Dialogue with federal and provincial government

⁶ 61.6% of girls attend primary school, 34.2% high school and 8.3% are enrolled in tertiary education.

⁷ State of Financial Inclusion of Women in Pakistan, World Bank, 2018

⁸ There is no women's rights Ministry at the federal level. The only institution is the National Commission on the Status of Women, which has a monitoring and advisory role and limited budget.

⁹ However, there are various specific networks and/or alliances created through donor-funded programmes such as the Gender and Humanitarian Task Force. There are also informal networks advocating for women's rights such as Women's Action Forum and Aurat March. Alliances to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) exist at provincial and the federal levels

representatives, civil society, the private sector and other development partners (largely as part of the MIP 2021-27) also fed the process.

2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

In relation to the 2021-27 programming, to reach the targets set by the EU Gender Action Plan III 2021-25 (GAP III), the EUDs need to ensure that **at least 85%** of all new actions will have gender equality as a significant ([Gender Marker 1](#)) or principal objective ([Gender marker 2](#)) in each priority area/sector of the EU-Pakistan Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP).¹⁰ GAP III puts forward “key thematic areas of engagement” and possible objectives¹¹.

EU and Member States have until now focused on all three priority areas of the GAP II but without applying a coherent approach and/or common prioritization. Following this, a more focused approach is proposed under the MIP 2021-27 and the CLIP, also taking into account the priorities highlighted in the Gender Analysis of Pakistan 2020, the EU-Pakistan Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy 2021–2024 and the CSO roadmap which is being developed in parallel to the CLIP.

The overall objective of the EU and Member States’ interventions under the CLIP is to promote women’s rights and opportunities in Pakistan.

Four thematic areas of engagement of the GAP III will be prioritised. These are:

1. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence
2. Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women
3. Advancing equal participation and leadership
4. Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation

These are elaborated below.

The remaining two thematic areas of engagement on sexual and reproductive health and rights and the women, peace and security agenda are equally relevant in Pakistan and will be supported through political/policy dialogue and advocacy (also see point 5 below).

1) Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence (GBV)

The specific thematic objective of the dialogue and actions are the following:

- 1.1 Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are better protected from all forms of gender-based violence in the public and private spheres, in the work place and online through legislation and effective enforcement;*
- 1.2 Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, who experience gender-based violence have increased access to essential services.*

The MIP 2021-27 priority area 3 (governance) objective 1 (strengthened governance and rule of law in line with international standards) includes that rule of law is promoted at the national and provincial levels and equal access to justice for all is ensured with continued implementation of Rule of Law roadmaps. The EU aims at setting-up a follow-up programme to the current Rule of Law Support Programme (2021-2025) with a stronger focus on access to justice and support to victims of GBV. The indicator is: “*proportion of*

¹⁰ OECD gender markers G1 and G2 will be applied: for G1 each action should include at least one specific objective on gender equality complying with and/or including targeted actions (OECD gender marker G2).

¹¹ Refer to chapter 3 of the Joint Communication and to Part II of the SWD.

victims of violence, disaggregated by gender) in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms”.

2) Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women

The specific thematic objectives of the dialogue and actions are the following:

- 2.1 Increased access for women, in all their diversity, to decent work, including women's transition to the formal economy and coverage by non-discriminatory and inclusive social protection systems;*
- 2.2 Increased access for women in all their diversity to financial services and products, and productive resources;*
- 2.3 Women in all their diversity have improved access to entrepreneurship opportunities, including social entrepreneurship, alternative livelihoods and strengthened participation in the green and circular economy;*
- 2.4 Reduction in gender disparities in enrolment, progression and retention at all levels of education and lifelong learning for women, men, girls and boys.*

The MIP 2021-27 priority area 1 (green inclusive growth) specific objectives 1 (Sustainable growth of SMEs and MSMEs) and 2 (improve the performance of agribusiness and its integration into local and regional value chains) aiming at giving continuity and geographically expanding EU's current activities in support of the private sector (MSMEs). A particular focus will be given on women-led enterprises. Continued advocacy to recognize their potential as economic actors and extending support to them for acquiring skills or education that assists them in transitioning to employment or achieve income security will be necessary. Another important area of work would be to bring the informal sector under legal cover, as the majority of women are engaged in informal work and have no employee rights, protection or security. A set of specific indicators has been elaborated for objective 1: “*Number of SMEs and MSMEs (including women led) that are registered with Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) with EU support*” and “*Number of MSMEs (including women led) targeted by skill development programmes*”; and objective 2: “*Number of producers (disaggregated by gender) entrepreneurs (disaggregated by gender) and businesses reporting increased profit generated with EU support*”, “*Number of service providers supported by EU interventions*” and “*Number of beneficiaries with access to financial services with EU support: (a) firms, (b) people (all financial services), (c) people (digital financial services)*”

The MIP 2021-27 priority area 2 (human capital) specific objective 2 (adequately skilled labour meets the demand of agribusiness, water and energy sub sectors) seeks to enhance the quality of skills/VET in the agribusiness, water and energy sub-sectors. This includes members of the refugee communities. Building on ongoing practices, a strong focus will be on women with an indicative target of at least 30% female beneficiaries. Indicators include: “*Percentage of TVET graduates (disaggregated by gender) employed*” and “*Number of refugees (disaggregated by gender) included in TVET programs*”.

The MIP 2021–27 priority area 3 (governance), specific objective 2 aims at “*greater adherence to the international agreements that underpin the GSP+ scheme*”. The expected result is “*improved implementation of international human rights, environmental and labour standards, in particular with a focus on the sectors addressed under priority area 1.*” This result will be complementary to the economic growth programme that is the key result of the MIP and strongly focus on enhancing a conducive environment for women's economic empowerment. Programmatic focus will be on monitoring human rights through

independent commissions and GSP+ monitoring support. Advancing labour standards particularly for women will be monitored through specific indicators to get a clearer picture on the economic hurdles women face in Pakistan: the situation of women in the formal and informal sector through the indicator “*Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex*” and the situation of girls through the indicator “*Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age*”.

3) Advancing equal participation and leadership

The specific thematic objective of the dialogue and actions is the following:

- 3.1 Enabling conditions created for equal participation of women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, in decision-making*
- 3.2 Women and girls, in all their diversity, have improved access to justice to safeguard their civil and political rights*

Under the ongoing “Support to parliamentary development in Pakistan” programme (2021–2024) the EU is strengthening the capacity of female parliamentarians in the Women Parliamentary Caucus at federal and provincial levels, with in a view to enhance their voice and participation in the political arena. The on-going programme of support to the rule of law (2021-2025) supports measures to raise women’s awareness of their rights and to help women and girl's access justice and assistance, thereby strengthening women’s rights and empowerment (this includes inter alia developing alternative dispute resolution and legislative reforms targeting child marriage, inheritance/property rights).

4) Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation

The specific thematic objectives of the dialogue and actions are the following:

- 4.1 Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, addressing climate change in their daily lives and preserving the natural environment are recognised and valued;*
- 4.2 Women and men in all their diversity, increasingly participate in and have improved access to jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities and alternative livelihoods in the green economy and the circular economy;*

The MIP 2021–27 priority area 1 (green inclusive growth) is centred on the opportunities the green transition can offer for a sustainable development led by responsible natural resources management, increased access to energy and renewable energy sources as well as improvement of energy efficiency production, distribution, accessibility and consumption. Specific indicator set in the MIP under specific objective 4 “*Increased access to electricity for rural communities from off-grid and other renewable energy sources*” is “*Number of MSMEs (including women led) using production facilities supplied by renewable energy*”.

The Team Europe Initiative (TEI) will also contribute to the green growth and green transition supporting Pakistan on its green recovery path through sustainable natural resource-based green job creation (i.e. in agriculture, forestry and value chains).

EU and MS will further support complementary actions aimed at ensuring the availability of skilled workforce, access to finance and strengthen climate change adaption and mitigation to ensure an inclusive and green development. Enabling factors for production such as access to finance, energy and skilled workforce will be supported through the MIP and will complement the TEI.

The TEI, like the overall MIP, has as primary target group youth and women and aspects of crosscutting nature such as connectivity, technology transfer and digitalisation.

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

The targeted action(s) will mostly support priority area 03 of the MIP 2021-2027. They relate to SO6, Result 4 *“improved access to social and economic rights”* corresponding to GAP III's thematic area of engagement 2 (strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women).

One of the most fundamental issues in governance is that not every citizen is registered in the national civil registry (NADRA) which has implications for planning processes (supply side) as well as for access (demand side). The first step towards citizenship is the recording of a birth. Only 34% of children under five are registered at birth nationally. Non-registration of births means an individual is not recognized as an entity by the state which leads to multiple complications later in life at the individual and national level. It is difficult to assess age in the absence of a birth certificate, which is also a requirement for issue of the National Identity Card (NIC). Without the NIC, a person cannot access education, healthcare, social protection and other services, get their inheritance and property registered, open a bank account or register as voter. 12.5 million women lack a NIC. **Ensuring access to civil registration and NICs for women and girls** in targeted areas as basic to strengthen economic and social rights and empower girls and women will be the heart of the Delegation's G2 action.

This will be combined with a targeted action as envisaged under the cross-cutting MIP theme of working towards achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. **A programme can be foreseen that incorporates strengthening the women machinery.** The National and Provincial Commissions on the Status of Women are mandated to examine policies, programmes and other measures taken by the Government for women's development and gender equality. Departments of Women's Development at the provincial levels and Ministry for Human Rights at the Federal level have an overarching role of leading the legislative agenda, coordination with other departments for gender mainstreaming, protection and promotion of human rights. Each ministry has dedicated gender focal points. The extensive National Women Machinery (NWMs) has not emerged as an effective watchdog body. This strong women-specific architecture will play a vital oversight role to flag issues of women's exclusion and suggest viable solutions to integrate women's interests in governance processes.

Priority area 03 (governance) of the MIP 2021–2027 set under specific objective 1 to *“Strengthen Governance and Rule of Law in line with international standards”* with a focus on improving access to social and economic rights, particularly for women. Specific objective 2 aims at *“greater adherence to the international agreements that underpin the GSP+ scheme and expected result is improved implementation of international human rights, environmental and labour standards, in particular with a focus on the on the agribusiness, water and energy sectors”*. It aims **at enhancing regulations and practices on property ownership of women, inheritance rights for women** and access to identification for all in the targeted areas, such as birth, NIC and marriage certificates. This will be complemented with support to the gender equality institutions with a view to enabling them to fulfil their mandate (see above).

The MIP 2021-2027 contains the following indicators to measure progress:

- Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age with EU support disaggregated by sex;
- Number of people who have been issued computerised national identity cards with EU support, disaggregated by sex;

- Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/ or control;
- Number of functioning independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles.

4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment

The EU, in coordination with Member States, will continue its engagement in political and policy dialogue at all levels with the Government of Pakistan.

All GAP III thematic areas of engagement will be accompanied by a structured political/policy dialogue.

EU will actively participate in the Annual Joint Commission EU-Pakistan and Human Rights dialogue (with Women rights and gender equality as one thematic agenda point), support action of the Government and civil society against GBV and for the empowerment of women, continue the dialogue with the Pakistani authorities concerning the remaining reservation against article 3 of ICCPR, on the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights inter alia.

Furthermore, EU will focus on involvement of and extensive consultation with partners, CSOs, Women's Organizations and relevant stakeholders in its gender focused calendar.

Participation in fora, round tables, meetings will be guaranteed in order to advance EU positions on key areas in the field of gender.

Regular dialogue on gender equality and women's empowerment with CSOs in the framework of the CSO Roadmap will be foreseen.

5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities

The EU's public diplomacy aims at supporting events on the following days under the EU Communication strategy.

- Pakistani Women's Day – February 12.
- International Women's Day – March 8.
- International Day of Rural Women – October 15.
- 16 days of activism against GBV – November 25 to December 10

For the organization of and participation to these events the EU will coordinate and cooperate with Member States.

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

No specific amount has been earmarked in the EUD's cooperation facility to support the implementation of GAP III at country level. Resources will be mobilized at Action level considering the gender relevance in the MIP 2021-2027. Sufficient financial support will be committed in order to achieve the objectives/indicators foreseen in the present CLIP.

Date: 22 November 2021

e-Signed Head of Delegation, Androulla Kaminara