



Addressing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Czech Republic's Development Cooperation

Advocacy Card

**International Gender Policy Network
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INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and women's empowerment have come to be understood as crucial prerequisites to development, and have been included among the ambitious UN Millennium Development Goals, which were signed by 189 governments in 2000. These commitments have been declared to reduce the gender gap and empower women in the developing world. However, civil society organizations across Europe have emphasized that governments are failing to deliver on their promises. According to the Concord report of 2008, the situation is more critical in new EU Member States where the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment is "a secondary element for the moment" (Romania) or "non-existent in the development aid agenda" (Latvia).¹

The International Gender Policy Network (IGPN) has examined gender equality and women's empowerment in the development cooperation of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia as part of the project Development Cooperation and Gender. Within the framework of this advocacy activity, IGPN has prepared twenty two Advocacy Cards for individual countries and a Regional Advocacy Report. The documents demonstrate that gender equality and women's empowerment are not integrated into all phases of the development processes in this region, and a more intense and determined approach is needed from the development actors. The aim of this advocacy work is to call for action by reminding the national as well as European representatives of their formally anchored commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Advocacy Card for the Czech Republic focuses on its role as an emerging donor country. This document provides a review of the Czech Republic's key political and legal commitments, and examines the gender aspect of bilateral development cooperation. On the basis of these reviews, recommendations are made to the national government, and to the European institutions.

COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

- ❖ Czech Republic's commitment to gender equality is reflected in a **number of politically and legally binding documents** of the EU and EC (Treaty of Amsterdam, Maastricht Treaty, Charter for Fundamental Rights of the EU, CEDAW, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals).
- ❖ In terms of the EU development cooperation policy implemented by the institutions as well as by the Member States, the crucial policy framework for promoting gender equality is the **European Consensus on Development**, agreed upon in 2005 by the European Commission, the Council and the Parliament, and the representatives of the member states, where gender equality is defined as a cross-cutting issue.² Furthermore, the **2007 Commission Communication on "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation"** is the first step towards a coordinated European approach to promoting gender equality and empowering women through development cooperation.³
- ❖ Related to the 2007 Commission Communication is the document "Conclusions of the Council of the EU and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States", also known as the **Council Conclusion**. One of the conclusions is the following: "The

¹ No Time to Waste: European governments behind schedule on aid quantity and quality, *Concorde*, 2008, p. 15 <http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/extranetdocumentsENG/NavigationSecondaire/WorkingGroups/Aidwatch/Aidwatch2008/Light-Full-report.pdf>

² EU Policy Framework for Promoting Gender Equality, *European Commission*, http://ec.europa.eu/development/policies/crosscutting/genderequ_en.cfm

³ Ibid.

Council recognizes the Commission's and the Member States' specific responsibility to support developing country partners in eliminating discrimination and gender inequality by increasing visibility and accountability on gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation and to promote and engage in an enhanced political dialogue at all levels, including the highest political level, which incorporates gender equality explicitly as a central theme."⁴

- ❖ In line with these documents, the EU (and thus the Member States) has supported a **twin-track approach: gender mainstreaming** (mainstreaming gender issues into all aspects of development policy) and **specific measures** aimed at socioeconomic and political empowerment of women.

GENDER IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC'S ODA⁵

Within the framework of the MDGs, gender equality is a cross-cutting issue as well as a goal in itself. Although the Czech Republic is formally committed to the MDGs, gender equality and women's empowerment are highly disregarded in the practice of Czech development cooperation. In the strategy documents of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), gender equality is referred to as a cross-cutting issue; nonetheless, no further attention is given to gender concerns and the twin-track approach is thus completely absent in the Czech ODA (Official Development Assistance).

It is important to mention that since 2007, the Czech ODA system has been going through a transformation process, aimed at centralization of the ODA under the MFA. Until 2010 each project of the Czech ODA will be managed by the Czech Development Agency, and from 2011, the agency will be able to start fulfilling a new conception – with new topics and perhaps also a new list of priority countries in terms of a better coordination. The process of transformation of the Czech ODA system is viewed by FoRS, the Czech platform of development NGOs, as a positive move. With regards to gender concerns, however, a question remains whether the Czech administration will reflect on the critical assessments provided by the civil society organizations. As for example critically pointed out in the 2008 report of Concorde, there is no specific gender strategy in development cooperation of the Czech Republic nor is there earmarked funding for gender issues.⁶ According to the Department of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of the Czech MFA, the Czech Republic has no gender equality strategy, partially because gender is taken as a cross-cutting issue, partially due to the fact that the Czech ODA system is still being developed and finally also due to the lack of capacity within the framework of the current ODA system.⁷ In view of that, the transformation process offers an opportunity for improvement and, indeed, a closer inspection of the Czech ODA in the light of gender reveals an urgent need for it.

Overall, there is a lack of gender data in a majority of the projects of Czech bilateral development cooperation, and a lack of evidence that gender equality as a cross-cutting

⁴ Conclusions of the Council of the EU and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting with the Council on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation, *Council of the European Union*, 15 May 2007, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st09/st09561.en07.pdf>

⁵ A detailed 22-page country report "A Gender Analysis of the Czech Republic Development Aid" was prepared by Kristina Kosatíková of IGPN for the project EU-CIS Gender Watch realized in 2008 by the *Network of East-West Women*. The report can be accessed at: http://www.igpn.net/download/EU-CIS_Gender_Watch-Czech_Republic.pdf

⁶ No Time to Waste: European governments behind schedule on aid quantity and quality, *Concorde*, 2008, p. 37, <http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/extranetdocumentsENG/NavigationSecondaire/WorkingGroups/Aidwatch/Aidwatch2008/Light-Full-report.pdf>

⁷ Information obtained by email communication with the Department of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance

issue is mainstreamed into all phases of the project cycle management. Without gender indicators, it is impossible to assess the impact of the projects on men and women. Moreover, a gender impact assessment is crucial for improving the capacity of development cooperation and for delivering effective aid.⁸ Furthermore, there are no specific measures in the Czech ODA directed at women's empowerment (the twin-track approach). Consequently, up to the present time, only a few projects can be found in Czech bilateral ODA which focus specifically on gender equality and women's empowerment. These projects include, among others, the following: the project PROFEMME (the promotion of women in Tambacounda diocese, Senegal) realized by Caritas Czech Republic; a project for building a centre for the victims of domestic violence in Serbia realized by ADRA and by the same NGO, the project Power for Safe Motherhood in Zambia; the projects of People in Need in Cambodia, Ethiopia, and Namibia; the project I Still Want to Live realized in Ukraine by Bliss without Risk; a project in Burkina Faso realized by Humanitas Africa; a project for the Iman Women's Community Centre in Chechnya realized by Berkat; and a project in Angola realized by the Czech University of Life Sciences.

Yet, even if a project is intended to contribute to women's empowerment, the opposite can happen, as demonstrates Ondřej Horký from the Institute of International Relations in his analysis of the project of agricultural education in Angola.⁹ Although the Czech programming document for Angola emphasizes the necessity of empowering women, the project of the Czech University of Life Sciences in the province of Bié focused on the area of agricultural education has supported above all men: out of 100 accepted students there were 15 women, and when the study was completed by 3 women and 15 men.¹⁰ As this case reveals, it is necessary to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are addressed in the Czech ODA. In addition, a brief look at the Regional Report¹¹ of this activity, which includes several priority countries of the Czech ODA (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Moldova) demonstrates that gender issues have to be an integral part of the overall development processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To press for EU Member States' development cooperation policy to include a gender equality perspective consistent with EU-level policy and commitments
- To provide information to new EU members on older EU donor states' experiences and good practices in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in development
- In relation to gender mainstreaming, the EU should be leading by example. European CSOs say that the EU is failing to deliver on its promises. Implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy is still hindered by a number of factors (mainly, the inadequate allocation of human and financial resources, the evaporation of policy commitments at the level of program implementation, limited gender competence among staff members,

⁸ For more information on the linkage of gender equality and aid effectiveness see for example Issues Briefs on Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment, and the Paris Declaration, *OECD*, 2008

http://www.oecd.org/document/54/0,3343,en_2649_34541_41048822_1_1_1_1.00.html

⁹ Ondřej Horký, Ženy, muži a rozvoj, *Rozvojovka.cz*, February 2008,

<http://www.rozvojovka.cz/index.php?id=200&idArt=33>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ To see the full Regional Report, visit the IGPN's website at: www.igpn.net

and the absence of political will) and is undermined by other EU policy initiatives, most importantly by the neo-liberal economic policy approach.¹²

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT:

General Recommendations:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To comply with the Consensus on Development and the Commission Communication and place gender equality and women's empowerment at the center of the Czech Republic's ODA
- To comply with the Council Conclusions and make gender equality a core aspect in the development policy's programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and to provide special support for women that enables their economic and political empowerment

Concrete Recommendations:

- To improve the institutional framework for implementation of gender into the ODA
- To improve the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the gender aspect in ODA projects
- To follow the twin-track approach and besides having gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, encourage specific projects on women in calls for proposals
- To improve the transparency of the Czech ODA by making all data, reports and documents available
- To establish a database of projects supported by the ODA program and make data on ODA projects publicly available (names of organizations, financial data, monitoring)
- To promote an understanding of gender mainstreaming in development cooperation at the MFA
- Upon building adequate technical capacities, carry out a gender impact assessment of assistance provided by the Czech Republic
- To initiate closer cooperation between Czech development NGOs and women's rights organizations, in terms of policy and strategy formulation, and to encourage Czech women's organizations to find a new niche in the field of development cooperation
- To increase gender expertise among the Czech development constituency
- To ensure an increase in awareness among the Czech population about development problems, including gender issues
- To support the gender dimension of development cooperation during the Czech Presidency of the EU on both national and European levels

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¹² Who decides? Gender mapping the European Union's policy and decision-making in the areas of development, external relations and trade, *WIDE*, 2007, p. 7

<http://62.149.193.10/wide/download/WHO%20DECIDES%20def.pdf?id=547>