



Advocacy Card

Addressing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Lithuania's Development Cooperation

**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. The situation in developing countries, nonetheless, remains critical: women are the poorest of the poor; they are largely excluded from decision-making processes; they often lack equal access to resources, land, credit, education, and health care. 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 the project Development Cooperation and Gender. Within the framework of this advocacy activity, IGPN has prepared twenty two Advocacy Cards for individual countries and one Regional Advocacy Card. 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 Republic of Lithuania focuses on its role as an emerging donor country. This document provides a review of Lithuania'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, to the European institutions and to civil society organizations.

COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

- ❖ Lithuania'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 addition, gender equality is taken into account in Lithuania's national policy on bilateral development cooperation.
- ❖ 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

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

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 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 LITHUANIA’S ODA

According to the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the priority partner countries of Lithuania’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) are Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, South Caucasus, Afghanistan and Iraq, and the priority areas are the following: the promotion of democracy, rule of law and human rights; economic development; Euro-integration processes; and administrative capacities building.

Since development cooperation is an integral part of foreign policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is taking the lead on policy and coordination. The focal point within the Ministry is the Development Cooperation and Democracy Promotion Department. In January 2008, Lithuanian NGOs established a Platform on Development Cooperation, in order to engage with the MFA in a dialogue on the direction of development cooperation.

Concerning the general amount of assistance, data for the past three years demonstrate steady growth: in 2005 it was 12,3 mln Litass (0,06 % of GNI of Lithuania), in 2006 18,3 mln Litass (0,08%), and in 2007 the amount reached 26,6 mln Litass (0,1 %). The total amount of assistance provided for gender equality and women’s empowerment projects is not available. Nevertheless, looking closely at the realized activities, several projects aimed at women can be found in Lithuania’s ODA. In 2007, three projects were realized in Afghanistan’s Ghor Provinc. The goals of these projects were to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health, promote gender equality and empower women, and achieve universal primary education. In 2006, the project “Democracy and Human Rights: strengthening gender equality” in Georgia was supported by Lithuania’s ODA.

Although Lithuania has made commitments to the MDGs and other international gender agreements, it is not clear whether these promises are reflected in the practice of development cooperation. There is no gender segregated data on Lithuania’s ODA, no gender indicators in the projects’ impact assessment. Furthermore, gender equality and women’s empowerment is not in the policy priorities or priority areas. The strategy of gender mainstreaming is not present in the official documents of Lithuania’s ODA. Overall, it is very

³ “EU Policy Framework for Promoting Gender Equality,” *European Commission*, http://ec.europa.eu/development/policies/crosscutting/genderequ_en.cfm

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>

difficult to find information on gender in Lithuania's ODA. As also pointed out in the Concord report of 2008, the "[l]imited access to crucial information affects to an even greater extent the capacity of NGOs to monitor their government's performance and raise awareness among public opinion on what should be the goals of Lithuanian aid."⁵ Furthermore, rather than focusing on poverty which is closely connected to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, Lithuania emphasizes the policy of trade promotion in its development cooperation.⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to the National Government:

- 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 Lithuania'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
- To improve the institutional framework for implementation of gender into the ODA (i.e. by establishing a Gender Working Group within the MFA)
- To improve the mechanisms on monitoring and the evaluation of the gender aspect in ODA projects
- To improve the transparency of Lithuania's ODA by making all data, reports and documents available, and by developing the mechanism of grant allocation
- To establish a database of projects supported by ODA program and make data on ODA projects publicly available (names of organizations, financial data, monitoring, gender impact assessment)
- To ensure close cooperation with NGOs, including women's rights organizations, in terms of policy and strategy formulation
- To prioritize poverty reduction in development cooperation before focusing on economic relations with the recipient country
- To increase gender expertise among the Lithuanian development constituency
- To raise awareness among the Lithuanian population about development problems including gender issues

Recommendations to the European Commission:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- 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

⁵ No Time to Waste: European governments behind schedule on aid quantity and quality, *Concorde*, 2008, p. 41 <http://www.concordeurope.org/Files/media/extranetdocumentsENG/NavigationSecondaire/WorkingGroups/Aidwatch/Aidwatch2008/Light-Full-report.pdf>

⁶ See for example 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>

the level of program implementation, limited gender competence among staff members, and the absence of political will) and is undermined by other EU policy initiatives, most importantly by the neo-liberal economic policy approach.⁷

Recommendation to the Civil Society Organizations:

- To engage in a dialogue with the national administration
- To promote a twin-track approach in Lithuania's development cooperation
- To provide shadow reports to the government reports on development cooperation
- To monitor gender issues in Lithuania's ODA
- More women's rights CSOs should get involved in development cooperation
- Women's organizations should provide gender equality expertise to the national administration and to the development constituency

Contacts: Virginija Aleksejune

Email: virginija@gap.lt

Web: www.igpn.net

⁷ 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