



Advocacy Card

Addressing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EC Development Cooperation with Tajikistan

International Gender Policy Network

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INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) has made commitments to promote gender equality and women's empowerment outside its borders. As stated in the "2006-2010 Roadmap for Equality Between Women and Men", "Gender equality is a goal in itself, a human right and contributes to reducing poverty. The EU is a key player in international development efforts and adheres to internationally recognised principles such as the Millennium Development Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). It has reaffirmed gender equality as one of the five key principles of the development policy in the European Consensus on development."¹ Although the EU's different levels of commitment provide developing countries with opportunities to address gender inequalities on their domestic soil, challenges remain to bring these commitments into effect.

Civil society organizations point at the gap between policy and practice: an overview of the European Commission's annual work, legislative programmes and policy strategy documents reveals a limited integration of gender concerns.² Furthermore, the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) and mainly women's groups in policy discussion and formulation lacks a clear mechanism, despite the obligation of EU institutions to support a political dialogue with them.³ As an active promoter of gender equality, the International Gender Policy Network (IGPN) intends to engage in a dialogue with the Commission's Delegations in the countries of Eastern Europe, South-eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia in the matter of the upcoming revision of the country and regional strategy documents (Country Strategy Papers, Regional Strategy Papers) due to take place in 2009. The IGPN has taken the opportunity of the midterm-review of the country/regional strategy documents to highlight the weaknesses of development cooperation in terms of gender concerns, and to advocate for improvements.

Within the framework of this advocacy activity, the IGPN has prepared twenty two Advocacy Cards for individual countries linked with IGPN, and one common Regional Advocacy Card. The aim of this advocacy work is to remind the European and national representatives of their policy commitments. The Advocacy Card for EC development cooperation with Tajikistan firstly provides an overview of EU's commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment. Secondly, the Regional Strategy Paper for Central Asia is examined in the context of the EU's commitments to gender equality. Next, an assessment of major gender issues in Tajikistan is presented. Finally, recommendations are proposed to the actors involved in various degrees in the preparation of the Regional Strategy Paper: the EU officials, national government and civil society organizations.

¹ A Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010, *European Community*, (COM 2006) 92 final, p. 9, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0092:FIN:EN:PDF>

² Who decides? Gender mapping the European Union's policy and decision-making in the areas of development, external relations and trade, *WIDE*, 2007, p. 10
<http://62.149.193.10/wide/download/WHO%20DECIDES%20def.pdf?id=547>

³ For more information see Chapter 2 in Who decides? Gender mapping the European Union's policy and decision-making in the areas of development, external relations and trade, *WIDE*, 2007
<http://62.149.193.10/wide/download/WHO%20DECIDES%20def.pdf?id=547>

COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

- ❖ A 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, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women [CEDAW], Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals).
- ❖ The promotion of gender equality outside the EU is outlined as the number 6 priority area of the **2006-2010 Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men** (Commissions' Communication). This priority is further detailed as follows: 6.1 Enforcement of EU legislation in acceding, candidate and potential candidate countries and 6.2 Promotion of gender equality in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), external and development policies. The key actions taken by the Commission will include monitoring and promoting gender mainstreaming and specific measures in the ENP, EU external relations and development policies, at policy dialogue and programming levels (Regional/Country Strategy Papers and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers); at implementation level, particular attention will be devoted to gender mainstreaming in the new aid modalities (budget support and sector programmes).
- ❖ In terms of the EU development cooperation policy, 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.⁴ 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.⁵
- ❖ 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."⁶
- ❖ In line with these documents, the EU 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.

⁴ "EU Policy Framework for Promoting Gender Equality," *European Commission*, http://ec.europa.eu/development/policies/crosscutting/genderequ_en.cfm

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ 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>

GENDER IN REGIONAL STRATEGY PAPER FOR CENTRAL ASIA

Preface to the RSP

The Regional Strategy Paper (RSP) is the EC's main programming tool which sets policy objectives and priorities of the EC's assistance to a particular region over a given period of time. The RSP for Central Asia covers financial assistance on both a regional level, and for each country individually, for the period of 2007-2013.⁷ The RSP consists of five main sections: EC cooperation objectives; the partner countries' national policy agenda; an assessment of the political, economic and social situation of each country; an overview of past and ongoing EC cooperation; and the EC response strategy.

The Central Asia strategy has been developed in consultation with the authorities of the partner countries of the region, and the Member States and other donors have been consulted during the drafting process.⁸ The EC Delegations in partner countries are responsible for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of development programmes at country level and for organising a dialogue with civil society organizations.⁹ In relation to gender issues, each delegation has a Gender Focal Point and assistance is also available from the gender desks in Brussels. Furthermore, there are various gender mainstreaming tools available to the European officials, such as Gender guidelines for Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and Mid-Term Review of CSPs.

Analysis of the RSP from a Gender Perspective

The RSP mentions gender in one instance in Chapter 5 (The EC Response Strategy, p. 31): "Gender issues and environmental concerns as important cross-cutting issues for the region will be integrated, as far as possible into the design of programmes relating to all the key issues outlined above, notably in poverty reduction and educational /capacity building programmes." Several references to gender are made indirectly with regards to poverty reduction in line with the MDGs. Furthermore, the Country Analysis of the RSP (Annex 5, p. 50) mentions that agriculture (which is Tajikistan's most important employment sector), particularly the cotton sector, is characterized by child labour and unpaid women labour. Moreover, the Country Analysis makes a remark about gender equality as being among the government's priorities for achieving the goals of poverty reduction and MDG indicators. Nevertheless, in a 61-page-long document, these are the only statements that concern gender equality.

Although the EC's Roadmap specifies promotion of gender mainstreaming at policy, programming and implementation levels, this approach is lacking in the RSP for Central Asia. The RSP does not mention gender issues with regards to reduction of poverty, health issues such as HIV, education, etc. In contrast, environmental problems as another cross-cutting issue are defined in details as a key issue to be addressed. This may indicate that a gender specialist, unlike an environmental specialist, did not participate in the preparation of the RSP. Furthermore, the only indicator (Annex II of the RSP) related to gender equality is the "Women's percentage share of paid employment (MDG3)." Goal number 3 of the MDGs is to promote gender equality and empower women; to accomplish this goal, however, gender issues must be addressed in a broader context, and thus, indicators should be available, for instance, for education enrolment for girls, poverty monitoring etc.

⁷ Regional Strategy Paper for Central Asia for the period 2007-2013, *European Community*, p. 3
http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/central_asia/rsp/07_13_en.pdf

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Who decides? Gender mapping the European Union's policy and decision-making in the areas of development, external relations and trade, *WIDE*, 2007, p. 70
<http://62.149.193.10/wide/download/WHO%20DECIDES%20def.pdf?id=547>

DIALOGUE WITH EC DELEGATION¹⁰

According to the EC Delegation to Tajikistan, there will be an identification mission in October 2008 for drafting the 2009-2010 National Indicative Programme for Tajikistan. The Delegation stresses that no agenda has been fixed, so it is too early to say if gender equality will be specifically taken into account in the exercise.

Concerning consultations with the CSOs, the identification mission will presumably entail internal discussion, meetings with donors, partners, including CSOs, but primarily with the beneficiary i.e. the Government of Tajikistan. According to the Delegation, consultation with CSOs, including women's rights organisations, took place earlier on this year, during the programming exercise for the country-based support scheme (CBSS) for 2009 and 2010 of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) thematic line.

The Delegation is aware of the EC Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation. The Delegation applies gender mainstreaming in its programmes, e.g. poverty alleviation projects implemented by NGOs support community-based organizations - these must be composed of 50% women. Furthermore, the EIDHR programme funds local NGOs, including women's rights organizations, which implement projects dealing inter alia with girls' access to education, preventing domestic violence, preventing human trafficking, and women's political representation.

IGPN'S ASSESSMENT OF GENDER ISSUES IN TAJIKISTAN

Although Tajikistan has been an independent state since 1991, political and economic transition is still an ongoing process. For the majority of the population, the transition period has meant poverty, vulnerability and serious social problems. Following the civil war in the 1990s, an overwhelming part of the population found itself below the poverty line, and among the most effected have been women.

Many women became widows, having on hands 5 and more children which is an average parameter for Tajikistan. Women's work load has increased as they have tried to support their families in the difficult economic times, having both a paid job and unpaid home duties. In a conventional Tajik society, there is an unequal distribution of home duties between man and woman and gender stereotypes and gender-based discrimination remain also in the work place. In Tajikistan, gender relations have been influenced by traditional pre-Soviet stereotypes, some of them having roots in ethnic or religious patriarchal customs, such as polygamy or violent marriages. In order to improve the situation, some steps have been taken by the Tajik administration and assistance is also coming from international donors.

In the Poverty Reduction Strategy adopted by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, gender equality is recognized as a priority task. Tajikistan has undertaken the obligations concerning gender equality at the UN's Fourth World Conference on the women's issues in Peking (1995) as well. With the purpose of increasing women's status, the National Action Plan for Increasing the Female Status and Role 1998 – 2005 was adopted in 1998. In 2001, the document Main Directions of the State Policy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Men and Women in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2001 – 2010, was approved by the government. This means that a certain legal framework for gender equality has already been created in Tajikistan. As for outside assistance, the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) has for example since 2005 helped to train more than 200 civil servants throughout the country to implement gender equality policies, and in order to increase the capacity of women's NGOs, the OSCE sponsored a forum on the role of Tajik women in development issues, and supported a group of NGO experts in preparing

¹⁰ Information in this section has been obtained through email communication of IGPN with the EC Delegation and desk officers in Brussels

the first shadow report on the implementation of the UN CEDAW.¹¹ The UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has operated in Tajikistan, and support for gender-related projects has been coming from the US AID (i.e. in the field of microfinances) or through the Women's Program of the Open Society Institute, among others.

Gender-based projects have also been realized with the financial assistance of the EU. Since 2006, the EC has funded two 24-months projects in Tajikistan: Access of Women to Information, and the Establishment of the Collective Potential for Family Violence Resistance; in 2005, a 12-month project Organizing Women's Support Services was launched aiming to raise public awareness, particularly the awareness of women to the violation of their rights, the public nature of domestic violence, and violence against women in the family in the remote districts.¹² Among other EU financed activities are ongoing projects focused on human trafficking or the education of girls.

Yet, gender inequality is strongly embedded in all aspects of social, political and economic life in Tajikistan. Tajik NGOs advocate for the strengthening of the efforts, saying that more finances should be going to similar projects, most importantly to cover the different regions of the country. The recent report of the Network of East-West Women (NEWW) "A Gender Analysis of EU Development Instruments and Policies in Tajikistan" concludes that while gender equality is one of the five common principles of EU development cooperation, it is clear that resources allocated to specific gender actions are negligible compared to other issues.¹³ On the basis of a brief assessment of current programs financed by the EU, the NEWW report assumes that only a small part of EU funds is allocated to solving specific women's needs, and even this small part is allocated within the frame of certain development programs (for example, TACIS, ECHO, etc.), and most development programs are implemented mainly through governmental structures and decisions on resources allocation are usually made by men.¹⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to the EU:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To integrate gender issues in all stages of country programming and project cycle (formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation)
- To apply gender mainstreaming into the priority areas of the RSP
- To strengthen human resources of Gender Desks and Gender Focal Points
- To increase the transparency of political dialogue with civil society in partner countries
- To follow the twin-track approach, and besides having gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, to encourage specific projects on women in calls for proposals
- To help ensure the financial sustainability of women's NGOs
- To push the Tajik government to address gender concerns on the level of policy as well as practice

Recommendations to the National Government:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To address gender concerns on the level of policy as well as practice
- To give special attention to funds allocation to women's organizations and their initiatives aimed at addressing women's issues

¹¹ Gender Awareness, *OSCE*, <http://www.osce.org/tajikistan/13489.html>

¹² Report of the European Commission, p. 308
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/worldwide/eidhr/documents/full_report_thematic_en.pdf

¹³ A Gender Analysis of EU Development Instruments and Policies in Tajikistan, EU Gender Watch, NEWW, 2007, p. 25, http://www.ngonet.dk/Files/Filer/KN/Ressourcer/EU_GenderWatch_Tajikistan.pdf

¹⁴ Ibid.

Recommendations to the CSOs

- To lobby the national government to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment
- To build alliances among women's organizations in order to strengthen the impact of their activities
- To engage in an active dialogue with the EC Delegation in Tajikistan
- To provide shadow reports to the government reports on gender equality commitments
- To monitor gender issues in the EC's development cooperation

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