



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

Advocacy Card

International Gender Policy Network

November 2008



Project Development Cooperation and Gender funded by the Presidency Fund

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 Concorde 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 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 Hungary focuses on its role as an emerging donor country. This document provides a review of Hungary'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

- ❖ Hungary'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

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.

- ❖ 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 HUNGARY’S ODA⁵

The Concept Paper of Hungarian International Development Cooperation (IDC), issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in 2002, includes among the general aims of the country’s IDC to “protect human rights and equal opportunities.” Although the Concept Paper indirectly gives support to women in this statement, gender equality and women’s empowerment are mentioned in Hungary’s IDC policy only in reference to the MDGs. According to the information provided by the MFA’s Department for International Development Cooperation, the promotion of gender equality does not appear explicitly in Hungary’s IDC policy and activities, either as a topical or as a cross-cutting issue. This is largely attributed to the fact that Hungary’s development strategy is generally not complex and finely segmented enough yet and, moreover, other horizontal issues are not integral to it, either. However, both of these are important aims that the governmental actors involved in IDC intend to pursue. As a result, at this stage no strategic document exists that especially stresses the importance of the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment in the country’s IDC activities.

The current lack of gender mainstreaming in IDC policy has had some effects at the level of IDC implementation and monitoring. According to the information from the IDC implementing agency HUN-IDA based on a telephone conversation, currently the aspect of gender equality does not appear consistently as a requirement in calls for applications related to project grants, or in the contracts signed with the executive organizations. As a result, currently projects are not monitored or registered according to the criterion of the promotion of gender equality. However, some more recent calls for tender, e.g. the call for projects in Afghanistan to develop health services, have required taking into account gender aspects in order to guarantee that the developed services would be accessible for both women and men, and that the project may contribute to the elimination of gender inequalities. Furthermore, there have been a small number of projects that, either partially or

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 This text is based on the country report A Gender Analysis of the Hungarian Development Aid which was prepared by *MONA Foundation* for the project EU-CIS Gender Watch realized by the *Network of East-West Women*. The full 27-page report on Hungary can be accessed at: http://www.neww.org.pl/download/EU-CIS_Gender_Watch-Hungary.pdf

entirely, have been aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, among them development projects in Serbia and Afghanistan.

Moreover, gender concerns seem to be followed by Hungarian CSOs which have the experience of applying for a tender from international organizations. For example, Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA) integrates the aspect of gender equality and empowerment of women over the whole period of each project (from planning and assessment through implementation to follow-up), according to its own and international standards. In addition, HIA has carried out specific projects for the promotion of gender equality, e.g. a complex social services project in Uzbekistan in cooperation with a local association for disabled women; also, their development strategy for Afghanistan and their implemented Afghan projects take into consideration and promote the situation of women, especially widows; and keeping gender-disaggregated data on projects is integral to their development-related work.

Hungary's ODA lacks a registration system containing gender-disaggregated data which makes it problematic when researching how much of the aid spent has contributed to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. Although officials of the MFA and related institutions have seemed quite cooperative regarding the issue, they were only able to provide some information on implemented projects, without any reference to previous or future commitment to gender-related activities, and, importantly, without information on how successful the projects have been.

The national aid watch activities of the HAND Association have opened up a lot of questions about the issue of ODA efficiency and transparency, but the platform's cooperation with policy makers is still in the process of becoming more regular and mutual. This will hopefully facilitate an increased openness on the side of the government to respond to NGO observations on the desired aspects of increased transparency with regard to the issue of gender equality as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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 Hungary'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 create a strategy for the promotion of gender equality following the twin-track approach recommended by the EU and by involving NGOs with relevant experience and knowledge about gender issues
- To mainstream the gender perspective into IDC policy, the operational mechanisms and the programme activities, particularly:
 - to include in the future actions of IDC the promotion of gender equality both as a cross cutting issue and as a goal to be pursued by particular projects
 - to include the gender equality aspect in IDC-related country strategies
- To provide specific training on the mainstreaming of the gender equality issues to government officers and to the experts of executive organizations
- To provide guidelines for gender impact assessment and to implement gender budgeting
- To include gender perspective throughout the whole cycle of the programmes

- To assign to the MFA a stronger supervising and monitoring role with regard to gender equality
- To collect and publish quantitative, gender-disaggregated data regarding funds allocation and project implementation, and qualitative data on the success of implemented projects, including the assessment by beneficiary groups

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EU COMMISSION:

- To require gender analysis within Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and to monitor whether gender analysis has been applied in CSPs
- To press for EU Member States' IDC policy to include a gender equality perspective consistent with EU-level policy and commitments
- To draw upon the assessment reports of CONCORD with regard to the advancement of gender equality issues in EU Member States' IDC policy and activities
- To provide information to new EU members on older EU donor states' experience and good practice in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in development

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