



Advocacy Card

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

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 Armenia firstly provides an overview of EU's commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment. Secondly, the Country Strategy Paper for Armenia is examined in the context of the EU's commitments to gender equality. Next, an assessment of major gender issues in Armenia is presented. Finally, recommendations are proposed to the actors involved in various degrees in the preparation of the Country 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

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

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 THE COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER FOR ARMENIA

Preface to the CSP

The Country Strategy Paper (CSP) is the EC's main programming tool which sets the policy objectives and priorities of the EC's assistance to a particular country over a given period of time. The CSPs consist of five main sections: EC cooperation objectives; the partner country's national policy agenda; assessment of the political, economic and social situation; assessment of past and ongoing EC cooperation; and the EC response strategy. Gender equality issues should be reflected in each section of the CSP.⁷

The CSPs are drafted on the basis of a dialogue between the EC Delegation and Brussels, the Member States' embassies, government ministries and civil society in the country.⁸ 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 the Mid-Term Review of CSPs. The Mid-Term Review process presents an important opportunity to address the mainstreaming of gender equality in the 'first generation' of CSPs and to examine the adequacy of the treatment of gender issues section by section, as indicated in the EC's Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in EC Development Cooperation.⁹

Analysis of the CSP from a Gender Perspective

The CSP refers to gender issues on p. 11 in an analysis of social development, using an estimate from the World Bank: "Armenia is likely to meet the Millennium Development Goals for gender and education, may meet the goals for poverty reduction, infectious diseases and environmental sustainability, but is unlikely to meet those on child mortality and maternal health." The document further mentions that gender as a cross-cutting issue should be integrated to the fullest possible extent into programmes for all the key issues listed under people-to-people contacts (p. 20).

Overall, the CSP pays minor attention to gender issues. There are no other remarks on gender equality nor are gender indicators provided. The CSP does not mention gender issues with regards to poverty reduction, employment, trafficking in human beings, etc. The only comment on gender equality is an estimate from the World Bank, as mentioned above. This may indicate that there is a lack of sources on gender in Armenia or perhaps the preparation of the CSP was done without the involvement of a gender specialist and/or women's NGOs.

In addition, although the EC's Roadmap specifies the promotion of gender mainstreaming at policy, programming and implementation levels, this approach is lacking in the CSP for Armenia. 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 the education enrolment of girls, poverty monitoring, etc.

⁷ Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender Equality in EC Development Cooperation, *European Commission*, 2005, p. 34, http://www.iiav.nl/epublications/2004/toolkit_on_mainstreaming_gender_equality.pdf

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 39

DIALOGUE WITH EC DELEGATION¹⁰

According to officials in the EC Delegation in Yerevan, the Delegation has been independent only since February 2008 and is still clearly understaffed. The Delegation does not have a Gender Focal Point. Currently, the EC Delegation does not have any projects in Armenia that specifically focus on gender issues. However, they have received a couple of women's empowerment proposals under the current EIDHR (European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights) call for proposals. All proposals under this call are in the process of evaluation.

IGPN has made inquiries concerning the Mid-term Review of the CSP; however, no concrete information has been provided either by the Delegation or desk officers in Brussels.

IGPN'S ASSESSMENT OF GENDER ISSUES IN ARMENIA

Since independence in 1991, Armenia has experienced increases in poverty levels and troubling declines in human development as a result of both the economic transition and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.¹¹ Furthermore, the transition has seen increasing gender disparities in employment, and steadily falling fertility rates combined with a high abortion rate and large scale male migration have also led to troubling demographic changes.¹² In recent years, some progress has been achieved in the realm of gender, with some support coming from the government as well as from international assistance.

Armenia has developed a Gender Policy Strategy, a law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities, and a law on Domestic Violence. The first two are supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues and the UNDP (United Nations Development Program). A prominent women's NGO, the Armenian Association of Women with Higher Education, has been involved as a key player in developing the strategy and the law. Another local women's organization, the Women's Rights Centre, is leading a Working Group established in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues, RA Police, Ministry of Health, and others, to develop the law on Domestic Violence.

Gender issues had been incorporated in the new sustainable social development strategy adopted by Armenia, and for the first time, the government's Action Plan for 2008-2012 includes gender equality as a priority direction. The Action Plan encompasses issues of domestic violence prevention and assistance provision for the victims of violence and their family members. The 2009 state budget envisages 16 mil. drams (about 52,000 USD) for services, intended for the victims of violence. A gender component has also been made a part of the revised PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper).

Concerning gender issues in the EC's development cooperation with Armenia, the key players in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment in the NGO world have no information on the EC Delegation's commitments to gender, their current and future program plans and the mechanisms of project funding and implementation. This fact is rather surprising, considering that Armenia's gender experts come from the NGO sector which actively collaborates with relevant government and state bodies and international organizations. The absence of public awareness of EC projects in Armenia allows women's NGOs to say that even if such projects exist, they cannot be considered sufficient and efficient. On the other hand, women's NGOs recognize the need of nationwide programs at the governmental level that would ensure sustainability, higher effectiveness of efforts, and the engagement of all layers of society into the projects.

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

¹¹ Armenia Gender Profile, *The World Bank*, 2000

¹² Ibid.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to the EU:

- To deliver on its promises to international gender agreements
- To integrate gender issues into all stages of country programming and project cycle (formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation)
- To apply gender mainstreaming into the priority areas of the CSP
- To strengthen the EC's internal gender capacity (Gender Desks and Gender Focal Points)
- 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 help ensure the financial sustainability of women's NGOs
- To increase the transparency of political dialogue with civil society in partner countries
- To push the Armenian 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
- To organize trainings for parliamentarians, ministries, marzpetarans (centres of provinces/marzes) and municipalities on a regular basis, as part of a governmental program: target officials at all levels, including decision-making levels
- To organize widespread public awareness campaigns (public TV/radio programs)
- To work towards the integration of gender education into the curricula at kindergartens, schools and higher education institutes
- To provide officials, teachers and professors with the necessary literature on gender, including intergovernmental agreements on "gender equality commitments"

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 advocacy and lobbying activities
- To engage in an active dialogue with the EC Delegation in Armenia
- To provide shadow reports to the government reports on gender equality commitments
- To monitor gender issues in the EC's development cooperation
- To advocate for the inclusion of projects that specifically target gender issues, apart from having it as a cross-cutting issue
- To raise public awareness of gender equality and keep the public up-to-date concerning the developments in this field (to serve as a link between the government, EU and the general public)

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