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POLISH GOVERNMENT, WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND OUR DISAPPOINTMENT

At the last session of the Sejm (Polish Lower House of Parliament) of the current term of office, the Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment on behalf of the Government presented what has been done to advance women's rights and eliminate gender-based discrimination in the last four years. The information was provided on the request of the left-wing party in opposition in Sejm.

KARAT in cooperation with civil society organizations working in the field of women's rights organized a press conference at which main comments to the Government's performance were presented. First of all, women's groups expressed disappointment with the fact that the Government did not commit to effectively improve women's situation (especially vulnerable groups of women) and that there was no comprehensive approach to policy making. Poland did not implement any National Programme for Women since 2005, which translates into lack of sustained and relevant policy at place. The ad hoc activities that are carried out do not address the most burning areas of discrimination that are: reproductive health and rights, discrimination in education, sustained gender-based stereotypes and lack of legal protection from discrimination in all areas of life.

Women's rights advocates highlighted dissatisfaction resulting from the fact that women's groups weren't involved in the consultation process with the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment, as well as design, implementation and evaluation of activities.

What is more, Polish Government did not take any action to implement the last Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee and it did not meet the deadline for submitting its next periodic report that was due to September 2010.

For more information contact Magda Pohec at: magda.pohcec@karat.org.pl.

If you would like to learn more about CEDAW-related activities in Poland go to: <http://www.karat.org/karat,20,en.html>

YES FOR WOMEN



With the beginning of September the new civic project was initiated in Poland. It is called [TAK DLA KOBIET](#) (Yes For Women) and it is promoting its new draft bill entitled "Law on responsible parenthood and other reproductive rights". It legalizes abortion on demand up to 12th week and changes current provisions regulating access to sexual and reproductive health services. The initiative has to collect 100 000 signatures in three months to proceed with the project. When the signatures are collected, the draft will be debated by the Parliament.

KARAT supports this initiative.

To find out more, please contact Pamela at: pamela.wells@karat.org.pl.

GENDER EQUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Within Gender & Development program, KARAT is involved in advocacy work for inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment into a road to [IV High Level Forum \(HLF4\) on Aid Effectiveness in Busan](#), Korea (29th November - 1st December 2011) KARAT's representatives are working on national level (especially in Poland, due to the Polish Presidency in EU and their leading role in some EU bodies) and on international level through our cooperation with WIDE Network and CONCORD.

Recently, the [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament proposal for the EU common position for the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness](#) has been published as a reaction to Working Party on Aid Effectiveness conclusions and the first draft of the outcome document for HLF4 in Busan. Unfortunately, in all mentioned documents gender equality has weaker position than in Accra Agenda for Actions. Marginalization of gender issues in aid effectiveness agenda is an alarming sign for both donors' and partners' women's organizations. KARAT, together with WIDE Network and CONCORD, is going to mobilize in upcoming months to push the women's agenda forward.

To find out more about KARAT's current advocacy activities on gender and development please contact Marta: marta.gontarska@karat.org.pl.

Members' News

KYRGYZSTAN: STOP ABDUCTION OF BRIDES

The Women Support Center, along with the number of the organizations from women's movement and activists groups in Kyrgyzstan, launched a campaign against the forced abduction of brides (ala kachuu). In May the organizations held a public campaign called "Spring without them" in the town of Karakol of Issyk-Kul region. The reason for organizing the campaign was the death of two female students, who committed suicide because of their violent abduction and forced marriage.

In June 2011 a parliamentary hearing on introducing necessary changes and amendments on Kyrgyz law (Criminal Code, Family Code) was held. Women's Support Center was involved in organizing this event. As a result, a majority of the participants of this parliamentary hearing supported the amendments.

In addition, the same day a working meeting was organized by the WSC to develop an advocacy campaign against bride kidnapping. The meeting was attended by women's organizations and gender experts and activists from all over the country. It was agreed that a working group to develop a strategic action plan to counteract the kidnapping of brides would be soon established.

For more information please contact Rahat Suvanova at: kyrgyzwomen@gmail.com.

MOLDOVA: NATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM

The event entitled "Women in Independent Moldova - Achievements and Perspectives" brought together 400 women, from all regions of Moldova, who have contributed through their work to the political, social and economic development of the country – parliamentarians, former ministers, former deputy ministers, women managers, women

leaders at central and district level, trade union women, regardless of political orientation, religion, age and nationality.

The forum aimed at assessing the role of women in development of the country during 20 years of independence and strengthening solidarity of women in consolidation of democracy.

During the event, participants watched a film about the history of the country in the 20 years of independence, shared experiences and discussed the role of women in decision-making in various fields and remembered the history of women's movement in Moldova. The event hosted also an exhibition of documents and pictures reflecting the most important events in the development of the country and women's role in this process as well as UN Women cartoons on women's participation in decision-making process.

At the end of the forum, participants adopted a Declaration of the Women Participants at Women's National Forum.

The event was organized by the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, as the central public authority responsible for developing and promoting policies to ensure gender equality, at the initiative of the Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Ms. Valentina Buliga, with the financial support of the UN in Moldova (UN Women, IOM, UNFPA, UNDP), the OSCE mission in Moldova and the Embassy of Sweden in Moldova and in partnership with the [Women's Political Club 50/50](#) (KARAT member), [Gender Center](#) (KARAT member), National Confederation of Trade Unions, the Congress of Local Authorities in Moldova Company "Teleradio Moldova", Center "Partnership for Development", Forum of Women's Organizations in Moldova.

For more information please contact Valentina Bodrug-Lungu at: gendercentru@gmail.com.

World

CEDAW AND MATERNAL MORTALITY: IMPORTANT DECISION

The UN's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in July 2011 issued a landmark decision that national governments have a legal duty to guarantee that all women in their countries, regardless of income or racial background, have access to timely, non-discriminatory, and appropriate maternal health services.

The Committee has ruled on the basis of an individual case ("Alyne da Silva Pimentel case") that was brought by the Centre for Reproductive Rights against the government of Brazil. Alyne da Silva Pimentel was a 28-year-old Afro-Brazilian woman. Nine years ago she died of complications resulting from pregnancy after her local health center misdiagnosed her symptoms. In Brazil the chances of dying in pregnancy and childbirth are greatest among indigenous, low-income and Afro-descendant women.

This case was the first maternal death case to be decided by an international human rights body.

You can read the full decision [here](#).

UN WOMEN: WORLD LEADERS SUPPORT THE WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Women make up less than 10 percent of world leaders. Globally less than one in five members of parliament is a woman. The 30 percent critical mass mark for women's representation in parliament has been reached or exceeded only in 28 countries. During the 66th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, women political leaders made

a strong call for increasing women's political participation and decision-making all over the world. The leaders signed on to a joint statement with concrete recommendations on how to advance women's political participation. They have stressed that women's participation is fundamental to democracy and essential to the achievement of sustainable development and peace.

Signatories of the joint statement included: H.E. Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil; Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; H.E. Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State of the United States of America; Rt. Hon. Baroness Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission; H.E. Roza Otunbayeva, President of the Kyrgyz Republic; Lilia Labidi, Minister of Women's Affairs, Republic of Tunisia; Helen Clark, Under-Secretary-General and Administrator, UN Development Programme; and Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

You can read the statement [here](#).

WOMEN'S LOBBY OF SLOVENIA: SOLIDARITY WITH THE WOMEN IN RUSSIA AND POLAND

At the beginning of September, the Women's Lobby of Slovenia and their members organized two protests in solidarity with the women in Russia and Poland, threatened by serious attempts in the parliament to diminish their right to legal and safe abortion. Protests took place in front of the Russian and Polish embassies in Ljubljana.

The EWL members in Slovenia appealed in support of the women of Poland and Russia in letters addressed to Vladimir Putin and Donald Tusk and delivered to the Russian Deputy Ambassador and to the Polish Ambassador in Slovenia. These appeals requested from the Prime Ministers to use their political influence on the leaders of the most important political parties and persuade them to implement binding international standards concerning women's rights to freely decide upon their own bodies.

In Slovenia there exists a constitutional right to freely decide upon reproduction as well as effective legislation on sexual education and family planning. The result is a thirty year history of decreasing numbers of abortions and teenage pregnancies.

For more information, please contact [Women's Lobby of Slovenia](#) at zenskilobi@gmail.com.

POLAND: BILL BANNING ABORTION REJECTED MERELY BY 5 VOTES

On the 31st of August, the Polish Parliament voted against a citizen's bill to ban abortion merely by 5 votes. The bill was rejected by 191 parliamentarians while 186 voted in favor. It is sad that such a huge number of Polish parliamentarians voted in favor of the ban when both the relevant parliamentary committees and all the health professionals' unions consulted on the bill recommended to reject it.

The proposal of a bill was brought to the Polish parliament through a citizen initiative under which a bill can be introduced through a petition with at least 100,000 signatures. The proposal would criminalize all abortions, including for women who are pregnant as a result of rape and women who run a severe health or life risk by carrying the pregnancy to term.

Currently, abortions in Poland are lawful in certain circumstances, including situations in which the pregnancy endangers the women's life or health; prenatal or other medical tests indicate a high risk that the fetus will be severely and irreversibly damaged or suffer from an incurable life-threatening disease, or there are strong grounds for believing that the pregnancy is a result of a criminal act, such as rape. However, even women legally entitled to abortion face a lot of difficulties while trying to obtain it within the public health service.

Reports by the [Polish Federation for Women and Family Planning](#) (KARAT Member) and the International Women's Health Coalition show that the current restrictive reproductive laws mostly affect poor, rural and young women, who are unable to pay for underground abortion that would be safe enough.

Source: Human Rights Watch

European Union

EU DONOR ATLAS 2011

EU Donor Atlas 2011 is now available online. The donor atlas is an interactive e-tool that provides an overview of what the EU and its Member States do to support development across the world. It covers official aid from most EU Member States for 2009 as well as from the European Commission. It also contains information on key development indicators of developing countries. You can search by specific donor country, areas of activity (for example education and Millennium Development Goals which are crucial in terms of gender equality etc.), regions, or developing countries.

You will find the Donor Atlas following this [link](#).

ECONOMIC CRISIS: YEARS OF WORK ON GENDER EQUALITY UNDER THREAT?

At its annual meeting, the European Federation of Public Service Unions' (EPSU), which represents more than 270 unions and 8 million public service workers, debated the impact that the economic crisis on women workers in the public sector and on gender equality generally. The preliminary findings of EPSU research on the impact of public sector pay and job cuts on women in four countries show that the first wave of austerity measures has had a heavier burden on low paid public sector workers' who, in the majority of European countries, are women.

The EPSU research suggests that ongoing cuts in public services have a disproportionate negative impact on women. According to EPSU, there is an alternative to austerity – more progressive taxation and an alternative economic model which focuses on fairness and equality.

[More information](#)

EPF: BRIEF ON ANTICHOICE INITIATIVES IN EUROPE

Opponents of sexual and reproductive health and rights have been very active across Europe (for example in Hungary, Poland, Russia) in the first months of 2011. The European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF) has produced an overview of anti-choice initiatives across Europe from January - August 2011.

You can find the publication [here](#).

We also recommend you the article by The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) entitled "Pro-natalism In Crisis-ridden Eastern Europe Entraps Young Women". You can read it [here](#).

UN WOMEN: NEW RESOURCE ON PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

UN Women has released a resource that contains data on 86 countries concerning the prevalence of violence against women (VAW). The data includes statistics on physical and sexual violence and encompasses violence by intimate as well as non-intimate perpetrators.

You can find the data [here](#).

WORLD BANK: THE STATE OF GIRLS' EDUCATION

The state of girls' education has improved considerably in the past decade. However, girls continue to be discriminated in terms of access to education, completion of schooling, and acquisition of basic skills such as literacy.

[More information](#)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

KARAT Secretariat would like to sincerely thank the following for their contributions to the News (forwarding information and providing us with 'original' information): Gender Center (Moldova), Women Support Center (Kyrgyzstan), ASTRA, AWID, CONCORD, EWL, WUNRN.

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