



Regional Dialogue

Practicing the Promises: Gender equality and Women's rights in the EU 'NMS' development cooperation

Warsaw 12-13 May 2010

KARAT Coalition and **One World Action (OWA)** are pleased to invite you to a Regional Dialogue on women's rights in development cooperation to be held on 12 and 13 May in Warsaw. The aim of the Dialogue is to increase the capacity of women's organisations in New Member States (NMS) through learning, exchange of experiences, and networking to generate stronger collaboration between women from East, South and West on EU gender equality and development policy and practice. The Regional Dialogue will be supported (followed by or held in conjunction with) an evening public event to be held on day one. Both are organized within the framework of the joint OWA and KARAT project supported by European Commission (EC), Batory Foundation and FILIA: *Building Support in New Member States for Gender-sensitive and -responsive European Development Co-operation*, shortly: **Connect ! South East West women for Development**.

Rationale

The EU 12 are new players in the donor community. Since their entry into the EU in 2004 and 2007, the NMS have made commitments to increasing and improving their aid to developing countries. In the context of fostering their own development, and dealing with their impoverished backgrounds, responsibilities of becoming a donor require a great deal of adjustment. NMS are missing the necessary experience, expertise, and often a political will to be truly engaged in the process. As a result, volumes of the EU12 Official Development Assistance (ODA) are far behind the committed targets (0,17% GNI in 2010) and miss the effectiveness pledge. Furthermore, gender equality and women's rights are one of the weakest and the most fragmented issues in the NMS development cooperation systems.

The EU, NMS including, has agreed strong policy statements on gender equality and women's rights in development cooperation. According to the 2007 *EC Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Co-operation* gender equality is essential for sustainable growth and poverty reduction, and it is key to reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Fundamental documents such as the *European Consensus on Development*, *Accra Agenda for Action* or *Millenium Declaration* also recognize the essential role women's rights and gender equality have to play in all development programmes as far as the content, priorities, and budgets are concerned. Nevertheless women continue to experience sharp inequalities and severe poverty. Despite declarations and donors' good commitments, in developing countries of Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America, women



constitute up to 70% of those living below the poverty line. The challenge for the EU, NMS particularly, is capacity, allocation of sufficient resources, follow-through of policy and proper implementation.

Women in NMS and in Africa share many similar experiences which should facilitate the emergence of mutual awareness and building solidarity. The rapid process of introducing neo-liberal market that took place in Central and Eastern European after the Soviet Union demise led in many cases to loss of jobs, impoverishments of important number of the population and erosion of women's rights in certain areas (e.g. reproductive rights, care facilities). Just a decade ago NMS were still the beneficiaries of foreign aid for democracy support. Naturally then, there are many East / South synergies to be explored and bridges to be build.

Women's organisations in NMS generally have little experience in development cooperation. Their input and advocacy actions, however, are essential to support relevant decision-makers, and other development actors to recognise how fundamental gender equality and women's rights are to effective and sustainable NMS ODA, which is a constantly growing part of the EU funds for aid. A strong East-West-South dialogue and exchange is needed to build EU-wide support for development co-operation and for putting women's rights and gender equality at its centre.

2. Regional Dialogue objectives and expected results

Objectives of the upcoming Dialogue are threefold:

1. Learning: We will aim to share our respective knowledge and experience and learn about the realities and challenges women in developing countries are facing. We will focus on what is at stake as far as NMS and EU development cooperation systems are concerned and the mobilisation opportunities and entry points for women's rights advocates
2. Building Bridges: We will aim to *connect!* between Women's Organizations and NGOs within the EU NMS and OMS, as well as Sub-Saharan Africa and developing countries of Eastern Europe for future stronger collaboration and networking. We will also goal to challenge some stereotypes that came up for East / South and West / East perception.
3. Strengthening advocacy actions: We will aim to strategize about the best way to take advantage of the policy spaces under the EU and national development cooperation systems to engage proactively in bringing women's rights into the agenda

Expected results include:

1. Fostered links between the Women's Organizations and NGOs in EU NMS, OMS, and Women's Rights organizations in developing countries
2. Larger number of the Women's Organizations in NMS involved and advocating effectively for gender focused development co-operation.
3. NMS development cooperation systems challenged from a gender and women's rights perspective

3. Regional Dialogue participants

The event will gather 25-30 participants from:

- Women's organizations and NGOs from UE NMS: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia
- Women's rights and gender equality organizations from Sub Saharan Africa, CEE and CIS
- Gender and development NGOs and networks from the OMS
- Representatives from UNDP, European Commission, UK Department for International Development (DFID) tbc

4. Resource Persons and Facilitators

Resource persons and Facilitators for the Regional Dialogue will be drawn from the following organizations:

- Women for Change –Zambia
- Women's Legal Aid Center – Tanzania
- One World Action – UK
- KARAT Coalition – Poland
- Trialog – Brussels
- Women in Development Europe – Brussels
- UNIFEM Kyrgyzstan tbc
- UNDP Emerging Donors Programme – Slovakia tbc
- European Commission – Brussels tbc
- UK Department for International Development tbc

5. Public Event

The Regional Dialogue will be supported by a public event that will take place in the evening of day one, May 12th. The objective is to take advantage of the presence of the women from SSA and CEE&CIS in order to raise general public awareness and challenge stereotypical perception of women from the South and East.

During the public event we will aim to target the media and decision-makers with the messages and materials produced within the project. The event will be held in a popular venue in the Center of Warsaw and combine short speeches of decision-makers and women's rights advocates from developing countries. A joint KARAT and OWA photo exhibitions picturing the women's living conditions in the East and South will be displayed (tbc). It will be followed up by refreshments and informal networking space.

6. The Project

The Regional Dialogue is held within the framework of the joint One World Action and KARAT project funded by the EC: *Building Support in New Member States for Gender-sensitive and -responsive European Development Co-operation*, shortly: **Connect ! South East West Women for Development**. The project is aimed at building the capacity of women's organisations and development organisations in NMS: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia to advocate for the full implementation of the EU Development Consensus and the EC Communication on

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation. It also focuses on strengthening the allies and solidarity between women's organizations in Central- Eastern Europe and Global South.

The project is implemented with the following partners (which are KARAT's member organisations):

Gender Education Research and Technologies (Bulgaria), Gender Studies, O.P.S. (Czech Republic),

Org 'AUR' (Romania), and Slovak Center for Communication and Development (Slovakia). As a follow up to the Regional Dialogue, in 2011, partners will organize similar capacity building & networking events in their respective countries with the overall objective of building a strong EU-wide constituency for gender-sensitive and –responsive European Development Cooperation.

More about the project: www.karat.org

7. The Organizers

KARAT Coalition is a regional coalition of organizations and individuals that works to ensure gender equality in the CEE & CIS and Central Asia, monitors the implementation of international agreements and lobbies for the needs and concerns of women in the region at all levels of decision-making fora. KARAT is active in the fields of advocacy, monitoring, capacity building, and networking within the context of its 4 thematic programmes: gendered economic and social justice ; women's human rights ; gender focused development cooperation ; and organisational and strategic empowerment.

KARAT Coalition is composed by 54 members organization from 23 countries with a secretariat based in Warsaw.

One World Action (OWA) is a London-based international development agency that works with partners in the Global South on issues of governance, human rights and gender equality, with special focus on women's rights. OWA's **mission** is to create the power and opportunity for the poorest citizens to transform their own lives, and to challenge the international policies that make and keep people poor. As well as supporting its partners' work on the ground, OWA makes it possible for its partners to advocate for themselves and their causes direct to UK and European policy makers. OWA believes that marginalised citizens are their own best advocates.