



**Gender
equality
in development
policies and
practices
in Poland**

**KARAT Coalition
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Gender equality in development policies and practices in Poland

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DDC	MFA Department for Development Cooperation
DEO	Department for Equal Opportunities and Prevention of Violence in the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family (Moldova)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DIDP	MFA Department of Implementation of Development Programmes
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EUFOR	European Union Force
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FWO	Federation of Women's Organizations (Kenya)
GAP	EU Council Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development
GCE	Governmental Commission for Equality between Men and Women (Moldova)
HDI	UN Human Development Index
HDR	UN Human Development Report
MDG	Millennium Development Goal(s)
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (Ghana)
NAP	National Action Plan (Moldova)
NGDO	Non-Governmental Development Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSGE	National Strategy on Gender Equality (Moldova)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PODR	Pomorski Ośrodek Doradztwa Rolniczego (Pomeranian Agricultural Advisory Center)
SAGA	Semi-Autonomous Government Agency (Kenya)
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise

1. Introduction

Upon joining the European Union in 2004, Poland committed itself to adhering, in its legislation and policies, to the EU standards. According to the 1997 Amsterdam treaty, Poland, as a EU member state, is obliged to eliminate inequality and promote equality in all its policies and actions. In particular, this refers to commitments in the area of development cooperation and incorporating gender equality in development cooperation. Those obligations later became developed by the EC, *inter alia* in the European Consensus on Development and Gender Action Plan. The stipulations of those documents are best summarized as the twin-track approach, including both mainstreaming gender in all development policies and actions, and focusing some resources on women's empowerment in partner countries.

Expectations regarding development cooperation have been huge, especially in the non-governmental development organizations (NGDO) sector. In the seven post-accession years, Poland made several attempts at creating a multi-annual strategy for development cooperation, adopting the relevant legal regulations (law on development cooperation) and establishing an agency that would manage foreign aid. The processes, however, have been only partly successful. The years after accession have also been a period of growth for civil society organizations and other institutions involved in development cooperation. The national NGDO platform was registered in 2004¹ to represent the civil society in its dialogue with the relevant authorities, and numerous bilateral consultations have taken place, regarding different aspects of shaping the Polish aid system. Women's organizations have also become more active in development cooperation, and two of them are currently members of the national platform.²

2011 is a significant time to review to what extent those commitments have been kept. Polish presidency of the EU Council symbolically brings to a close the initial post-accession period, in which the foundations for a stable and functional aid system should have been laid. The presidency was also a motivation tool for decision makers in foreign policy (of which development cooperation remains part in the Polish system) to finally adopt the Law on Development Cooperation in September 2011 and re-launch work on a multi-annual program.³

1 Grupa Zagranica, the national NGDO platform, functioned informally since 2001 and was formally registered as an union of associations in 2004.

2 KARAT Coalition and Network of East West Women (NEWW).

3 The difference in terms of 'multi-annual strategy' (above) and 'multi-annual program' results from the fact that the initial consultations in the previous decade were conducted on a document described as strategy, whereas in 2011, work was launched on a document called 'Multi-annual development cooperation programme'.

While the finalization of the program has been postponed and the Law will only become effective in 2012, the presidency period is a suitable time to evaluate the present state of affairs and the development of the Polish aid system hitherto, as well as its condition and perspectives in light of the commitments to gender equality. This report sets out to do that, with focus on three objectives. The report aims to:

1. Gather solid evidence about how Polish policy commitments to gender equality in development cooperation are (or are not) being translated into action;
2. Ensure that the recipients of the Polish Development Cooperation in the Global South express their views on what needs to be done to ensure that gender equality policies are fully implemented;
3. Formulate sound recommendations to push for gender equality to be at the centre of the Polish development cooperation and strengthen an enabling environment for CSOs to deliver on gender equality in Polish development cooperation.

The report starts with the description of methodology applied in research on which it is based (part 2). It then moves to the presentation of the findings. Firstly, a critical review and comparison of EU and Polish gender policies in development cooperation is presented (part 3.1). Secondly, national contexts of Ghana, Kenya and Moldova are presented (part 3.2) and aid from Poland to those countries is described in detail, alongside of case studies of particular projects funded by Polish Aid in those countries (part 3.3). Next, key findings are presented, focusing on institutional barriers to gender equality in Polish development cooperation, as well as opportunities for action (part 3.4). Subsequently, a set of recommendations for different stakeholders is presented (part 4), followed by conclusions.

2. Methodology

The report is based on research carried out between August and November 2011 using qualitative methods. The preparatory research was based on desk reviews of available data regarding Polish development cooperation and the presence of gender equality promotion therein, projects funded by Polish Aid, and gender policies in Poland. In light of those findings, potential interviewees related to the Polish development aid system were identified, including both civil servants and decision makers. Five projects were initially selected for study within the research. The criteria for the projects were that they should be diversified geographically between Moldova and Sub-Saharan African countries, implemented over different periods of time (short-term and long-term cooperation between implementers and local partners), implemented by different types of actors (NGOs, government and local government organizations), and they should be diversified in terms of the expected level of presence of gender equality components. It must be noted that the five projects selected were basically all the projects that fulfilled the criteria, at least in Africa (in Moldova the selection was broader, but PODR "Stare Pole" was selected, because only in Moldova a projects-implementing institution other than an NGO could be found, and such a case was required according to the research assumptions). Based upon that selection, the implementing organizations were contacted with requests for interviews and information about their projects. Of the five organizations selected, only three were available for interviews – in the case of the remaining two, project coordinators were not available, due to having left their positions and not being accessible; unfortunately, their knowledge of the projects departed with them and no other sources of information remained within the organizations. Finally, three projects were selected, implemented in three different countries: Ghana, Kenya and Moldova.

The three particular projects were selected for several reasons. Firstly, they provided an overview of different actors: a self-government unit dealing with agricultural advisory services (Moldova), a small NGO focusing directly on short-term projects targeted at direct beneficiaries and with strong roots in cooperation with Kenya, and a larger NGO with a broad spectrum of different types of projects, focusing rather on long-term cooperation (Ghana). Secondly, types of projects and cooperation were different. In Ghana, cooperation was planned strategically, it had broad objectives and several projects were implemented with similar focus. In Kenya, the project was short and answered a direct need of the beneficiaries. In Moldova, the project was based on strengthening an established state institution. Thirdly, the projects were supposed to provide a scope of approaches to gender equality on different levels – in strategic planning of regional development (Ghana), in involving girls in a small project in the slums (Kenya), and finally, in providing equal development opportunities for female rural advisors and farmers in Moldova. None of the projects focused directly on gender equality or women's empowerment, since, as explained more broadly below, such projects are scarce in Polish development cooperation. It is also important to note that Polish women's organizations are practically not involved in

development cooperation, and while it would have been interesting to research such projects, they were nowhere to be found.

Following the final selection, further desk research was performed focusing on those particular countries, and interviews were conducted with Polish civil servants, dealing both with aid in general and with focus countries, independent experts and women's organizations, NGOs implementing the abovementioned projects, and experts on women's issues from partner countries. While initial desk research provided fundamental information regarding the presence of gender equality issues in Polish development cooperation in general and with the three focus countries in particular, or lack thereof, the interviews allowed for gathering opinions and recommendations from different stakeholders, regarding the actual state of affairs and perspectives for improvement.

Some major difficulties were encountered in the data collection process, specifically in the interviews. Firstly, the pool of Polish civil servants and decision makers that might potentially participate in the research is very limited. While it was finally possible to establish relations with key civil servants (Department for Development Cooperation, Department for Implementation of Development Programs, Eastern Department of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs – responsible for Moldova), decision makers and field civil servants (Polish embassy) contacted did not respond or were not willing to participate in an interview. Experts, women's organizations and civil servants from some of the partner countries were also very difficult to reach or unavailable for contact, often due to invalid contact data (in fact, in both Kenya and Ghana the data from the websites on national gender equality machineries was invalid), or lack of response to e-mail requests for interviews and technical difficulties with establishing a stable telephone connection.

Nonetheless, the final pool of interviewees allowed for gathering crucial in-depth data regarding gender equality in Polish development cooperation and the difficulties in contacting servants from partner countries only partially influenced the part of report regarding their national contexts, since high quality data on them is generously and broadly available in the form of reports and strategies.

3.1. Critical review of EU and Polish gender policies and strategies and those specific to countries of implementation

a) EU commitments

Gender equality has come to be clearly recognized as a fundamental factor and objective of development. It is also very unambiguously reflected in EU policies and commitments regarding development cooperation, which Poland should follow more decisively.

The European Community is strongly committed to promoting gender equality and empowering women. This is seen in the international commitments undertaken by the EU and its particular Member States, like the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), the Vienna Declaration (1993), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), and the UN Millennium Development Goals (specifically MDG no. 3: "Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women").

The EU declares a twin-track approach to gender equality in development, that is both incorporating gender issues into all aspects of policymaking (gender mainstreaming), and pursuing specific objectives aimed at combating gender inequalities. This approach and commitment is reflected in a number of documents. The European Consensus on Development (2006) states in ss. 4.4 that "the promotion of gender equality and women's rights is not only crucial in itself but is a fundamental human right and a question of social justice [...]." It also expresses a commitment that "the EU will include a strong gender component in all its policies and practices in its relations with developing countries". The consensus was followed by the European Commission's (EC) Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation and the subsequent EU Council Conclusions (2007), which reiterate the Consensus commitments, presenting a strategy and defining objectives in the area of "efficient mainstreaming" and "specific actions to empower women", as well as offer specific actions in the area of promoting gender equality in country programming, thematic programs and other financial instruments (e.g. the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights), and monitoring. It also provides the rationale and progress report on the topic. Next, the 2010-2015 Action Plan (2010) was adopted by the Council of the EU on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development (GAP). The GAP offers time-bound specific objectives with actions and indicators, focused on, *inter alia*, strengthening the lead role of the EU in promoting equality and empowerment in development, ensuring adequate resources, systematic placement of gender equality issues in dialogue with partners, and strengthening the EU support for partner countries in combating gender-based violence and all forms of gender-related discrimination.

Commitments in the area of gender equality are also reflected in other operational EU documents, like Article 31 of the Cotonou Agreement (2000, last revised in 2010), which is the framework document for cooperation between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, and the Joint EU-Africa Strategy (2007), which mentions gender equality as one of the key strategic issues. Apart from commitments, the EU also has specific tools to ensure incorporating gender equality into national and regional programming, like the Programming Guide for Strategy Papers (2008).

While the EC is often criticized by its own civil society for inconsistent application of the twin-track approach, inadequate expertise of its employees (specifically at the delegation level) and inadequate prioritization of gender equality issues, it has, at least, a clear policy and strategy on promoting them.

b) The Polish approach: legal and institutional framework, policy and implementation

The lack of gender-related policies and strategy largely results from the fact that development cooperation is hardly regulated in Poland. Only in 2011 was the Law on Development Cooperation adopted, and the last strategy for Polish foreign assistance was adopted in 2003. In 2011, works started on the new multi-annual program of the Polish development cooperation in consultation with development CSOs, but at this point the process has been put on hold.

Gender equality is not mentioned in the Law on Development Cooperation, adopted by the Polish parliament on September 16, 2011. It is also not clear whether – and to what extent – the multi-annual action plan (currently expected to be adopted and published in 2012) will include gender equality. Therefore, the annual Polish Aid programs remain the key and practically the only regulatory documents of Polish Aid.

Since 2007, women and gender issues have been mentioned three times in the annual programs: in the 2010 document, one of the “substantive premises of the Polish foreign aid program” was “respect for the principle of gender equality within all priority areas” (Program 2010, p.4); in 2011, one of the “framework assumptions” for the program was “respecting gender equality and promoting human rights” (p.4); in 2011, “professional activation of women” was a sub-priority for Afghanistan. This is not much, especially if one bears in mind that the former two assumptions have not been followed by any further explanation or methods of implementation, which might be expected for such horizontal principles.

The 2012 Program (2011) is slightly more vocal on the issue, although only in comparison with previous years. Equal opportunities and non-discrimination with special regard to sex is defined

as a general principle of implementing Polish aid, and women are present in sub-priorities for three countries: Georgia and Ukraine (“professional activation of women”), and Afghanistan (“support for organizations working for the benefit of women, including promoting the role of women in national politics and economy”). The budget for the priorities, of which the above are sub-priorities (each priority has three to five sub-priorities) is ca. EUR 350,000 for Georgia, ca. EUR 450,000 for Ukraine and ca. EUR 230,000 for Afghanistan, which practically means that no more than 100 thousand EUR may be expected to be spent on any of those sub-priorities. Furthermore, it is important to note that the term gender equality has fully disappeared from the program and it was officially replaced by equal opportunities, mainly understood as non-discrimination, which may be considered another step away from the gender equality focus.

The annual programs do not establish any monitoring or follow up on gender equality issues, which is, however, rather obvious, bearing in mind that no objectives are defined in that area.

There appears to be plenty of good will and very little opportunity and potential in the MFA departments responsible for Polish Aid. “We would very much like to have gender policies implemented in Polish development cooperation”, says Katarzyna Kaczmarek, head of the programming unit at the MFA Department for Development Cooperation (DDC).⁴ But the truth is, as she explains, that the programming unit only employs 4 persons and gender equality issues are merely one part of the job of one of those persons. With no leadership or support for gender-focused policies coming from the higher decision making levels, human resources to develop methods and tools to promote, implement or mainstream gender equality in programming of development cooperation remain too scarce.

The absence of gender equality at the policy and programming level is obviously reflected at the implementation level (MFA Department of Implementation of Development Programmes - DIDP). In implementing Polish Aid, gender equality is basically understood as equal opportunities, explains Agata Czaplinska. It is, however, limited in practice to non-discrimination and gender balance and lacking the crucial component of empowerment. Therefore, the only hint at considering gender equality in calls for proposals is one item in the application form, related to non-discrimination. “It’s there and I remember we’ve sometimes had long discussions over it”, says Przemysław Bobak, former desk officer for Moldova at the MFA and member of the Polish Aid assessors’ committee. Nonetheless, this, as one might call it, horizontal criterion, is considered prescriptive rather than substantial, and it does not normally prevent a project from being funded. “We would like to have some system of promoting gender equality in implementing development projects”, says Deputy Director of DIDP Agata Czaplinska. “But there are also many other topics we would like to promote. Something like topical champions within the department, as instituted by DFID, might work, with one focusing on gender equality. But that’s something to think about in the future.”

4 All interviews are listed in Appendix A to this report.

With no consistent requirements from the donor (Polish Aid), it is not surprising that applicants are usually not prepared to mainstream gender equality in their projects. Indeed, very little is done to help them. Within the training session for applicants organized by the DIDP, only a slot taking less than an hour was dedicated to the non-discrimination item in the application form, and no time whatsoever was devoted to a deeper explanation of gender mainstreaming in development projects, says Marta Gontarska from KARAT Coalition. Neither are there any guidebooks or background documents regarding gender equality made available by the MFA for grant applicants.

Development priorities, programs, the legal framework and all related documents are normally consulted with Polish CSOs, specifically those associated in the national platform of development organizations “Zagranica Group”. The platform, however, was not particularly vocal about gender equality issues, at least until 2010, when Karat Coalition, a Warsaw-based women’s network, joined in and started promoting them in communication with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The support among CSOs, however, is still rather moderate, and the momentum has not yet come for the Polish civil society to become an active advocate of strengthening gender equality in Polish development cooperation. “We don’t experience any constraints from the platform members in promoting gender equality as central issue of development cooperation,” says Marta Gontarska. “On the other hand, we don’t really feel much support or involvement from other organizations.”

The EU and global commitments on gender equality are generally neglected in Polish development cooperation. Poland lacks gender strategy in development cooperation and lacks expertise and understanding of gender equality, and more specifically gender mainstreaming, within the MFA departments responsible for aid (Department of Development Cooperation and Department of Implementation of Development Programs). This partly reflects the lack of institutional gender policy at the MFA as a whole,⁵ as well as the lack of functioning gender equality mechanisms at the general government and policymaking level.⁶

c) Conclusions

Of the twin track approach, promoted by the EU, neither track is really followed in Polish development cooperation. Gender mainstreaming is generally neglected and priorities related to women’s empowerment and gender-related development issues are practically absent. On the one hand, it is understandable: it is difficult to expect that with the absence of such fundamental instruments as multi-annual programming and financing or mid- to long-term strategy, topical strategies would be introduced. And then, without strategic commitments or action plans on

5 The only hint at the possible consideration of gender issues at the Polish MFA is the recently established position of the Plenipotentiary on Non-Discrimination Matters, seated at the Personal Matters Bureau of the ministry. Unfortunately, no information is yet available as to the scope of work and impact of this person.

6 For a broader discussion of gender equality in Poland’s policies, see: Szelewa (2011).

gender, it is hard to imagine their proper implementation. On the other hand, however, the declared positive attitude of civil servants is not accompanied by any requirement for promoting gender equality imposed by the decision makers. Therefore, it seems important to utilize this transition period of Polish Aid, with new Law on development cooperation being instated and the multi-annual plan under construction, for advocating and campaigning for gender equality in development cooperation both among decision makers, civil servants, and CSOs, whose support – or the lack of it – may ultimately prove substantial.

3.2. National contexts

Ghana, Kenya and Moldova were selected as case studies for this research. Women's situation was studied in the local context, and so was the consideration of gender equality in their development efforts and strategies. Aid from Poland to those countries was also researched and one project from each country, implemented by Polish organizations or institutions, was selected for a more detailed consideration.

All three countries rank as low to medium development countries in the 2011 UN Human Development Index. While Moldova ranks the highest, its relatively low level of development is perhaps best visible when contrasted to its much more affluent neighbors, as it remains the poorest country in Europe. Ghana is claimed to be on the beginning of its path towards much faster development, as oil production was launched there in 2010 from an offshore field, but it yet remains to be seen how the new funds brought on by that will be utilized. Kenya, being the poorest of all three focus countries, has continually suffered internal problems with corruption and instability over the recent years. Nonetheless, at this point all three countries are heading forward and experiencing slow but consistent economic growth, accompanied by social and political development.

Only Moldova has been a focus country of Polish Aid, with numerous projects being implemented there over the last six years. Kenya and Ghana have remained in one, "African" basket of priorities, and usually no more than two projects took place there, administered by Polish organizations and funded from the Polish budget.

In terms of gender equality, situation differs between the three countries. Both Ghana and Kenya rank below 100 in the UN Gender Inequality Index, while Moldova ranks 46th, which is roughly the same as Malta and actually one rank above the United States (47th). Yet, while in Moldova the problems women face are mostly of the "European" type, related to discrimination in the professional sphere and limitations in terms of reproductive rights, Kenya and Ghana face a long tradition of traditionally patriarchal society, which has remained strong, especially in rural regions, where women face much fiercer discrimination in the area of ownership and business, have low access to education or even basic reproductive healthcare. Nonetheless, all three countries consider gender equality an important focus of their development strategies, they have national mechanisms for gender equality, and continue to introduce women's rights and equal opportunities in their policies and action plans.

National context: Ghana

Ghana ranks 135th (up from 136th in 2010) in the Human Development Index, among Medium Human Development countries, which places it above average for Sub-Saharan Africa, with per capita GDP of USD 2,500 (PPP - 2010 est.). Ghana's population is ca. 25 mil. (rate of women to men is 1). The country is relatively rich in natural resources; oil production from an offshore field was launched in 2010 and is expected to improve the economic growth. Nonetheless, so far over half of the population is employed in agriculture (56%), 15% in industry and 29% in services. Ghana's dependence on foreign aid amounts to 27%, which is, however, a substantial improvement from 47% in 2000 (DFID 2011).

Ghana ranks 122nd in the UN Gender Inequality Index and while the situation in this area is slowly improving, a number of concerns continue to exist. Ghana was one of the first countries in Africa to ratify CEDAW and its constitution includes provisions that stipulate non-discrimination on gender basis, as well as women's rights. Gender equality has also been included in Ghana's National Development Policy Framework under the second Poverty Reduction Strategy (2007). The gender equality mechanisms are centered around the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC), established in 2001, and previously operating as the National Council on Women and Development (since 1975). The ministry has a clearly defined strategy, aiming at promoting the welfare of women, as well as enhancing their equal status (MOWAC, n.d.).

At the same time, Ghana remains a mostly patriarchal society. As Sossou (2011, p.2) put it, "The inferior position of women in traditional Ghanaian society was reinforced by a number of factors, including social practices, religious beliefs, and the practice of polygamy, child marriage, and widow inheritance. Many of these practices are still found today in some places in the country." Women continue to suffer from Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriages and harmful widowhood rites (although the latter were criminalized in 1998). While women constitute the majority of rural farmers in the country, their general situation in economy is much more difficult than men's, as their access to social security and micro-credits is limited. While the law stipulates equality in terms of land inheritance, tradition often limits women's access to land. In terms of education, while schooling ratio is approximately equal at the primary level (47% girls), their dropout rate is much higher and less than a third of university students are girls. It is often considered a result of problems stemming from the traditional role of women, such as forced marriage, teenage pregnancies, etc. (Mohammed 2010). Women's participation in politics is also limited, as they constitute roughly 8% (down from 11% before 2009) of parliament members and are hardly represented on local governance levels.

While Ghana continues to improve healthcare access for women, having introduced free antenatal and delivery services, working hard on reducing child and maternal mortality, and introducing public awareness programs on family planning and abortion, women continue

to suffer from limited access to reproductive healthcare, especially in the rural areas, and the problem is further increased by the continuously high prevalence of HIV in Ghana (1.9%, 2009), according to GhanaWeb (2010).

The number of women's CSOs has been increasing in Ghana, with over 40 of them participating in the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana. While most of them continue to focus on service delivery, the advocacy of women's participation, rights and empowerment continue to play an increasing role. Some of the key challenges in improving the gender equality situation in Ghana are: addressing girls' access to quality education, strengthening institutional mechanisms (like MOWAC) to effectively influence policy, and establishing more space for women in governance, both at local and national level.

National context: Kenya

Kenya ranks 143rd in the Human Development Index and is considered a Low Human Development country. With per capita GDP of USD 1,600 (PPP, 2010 est.), it is the poorest of the three countries considered in this research. Kenya's problems with corruption and political instability (including post-electoral violence in 2008), as well as its negligence to introduce reforms, have been preventing it from successful cooperation with international financial institutions, and over the last decade both the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have occasionally suspended or delayed aid and loans. With the population of roughly 41 mil. (men to women ratio of 1.02), as many as 75% of Kenyans are employed in agriculture. Kenya is increasingly less dependent on foreign aid, ranging from 3-4% of GNI, down from almost 15% at its peak around 1990 (Mwega 2010, p.5).

Kenya ranks 130th in the UN Gender Inequality Index, although the new constitution, adopted in 2010, is considered very modern in terms of gender equality and it introduces non-discrimination and equal opportunities provisions on many levels, bringing hope for improvement.⁷ Kenya became a CEDAW signatory in 1984, as well as a signatory of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategy for the Advancement of Women. Those commitments have been reflected in certain policies, like the National Gender and Development Policy (2000), and, especially after the adoption of the new constitution, the government has been active in adapting legal regulations to gender equality demands, working on laws regarding, *inter alia*, matrimonial property and marriage laws.

Kenya has gender-related mechanisms in place – the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development and a related Semi-Autonomous Government Agency (SAGA), the National

⁷ For a more detailed list of changes for women resulting from the new constitution, see: FIDA 2010.

Commission on Gender and Development. While the ministry has been accused of focusing mostly on children, changes are strongly advocated by women's organizations which are prominent in Kenya. Most of them are cooperating in the Federation of Women's Organizations (FWO), which is a representative body at the national level, lobbying the government on matters of women's rights in different topical areas.

While the general climate for women in Kenya is improving, the actual situation remains complicated. Traditionally women are underprivileged in the Kenyan society, and while their situation is much better in the cities, the rural regions, as well as city slums, remain conservative in this respect. Women have limited access to reproductive healthcare and information, as well as methodology of contraception. As a result, having 10 or more children is not an exception in some areas. At the same time, "being extremely vulnerable, women carry a lot of responsibility", says Alice Waweru from Technoserve, an organization which provides trainings to women. "They have to take care of children, fetch water, look for firewood, care for the family and still work in agriculture".

Women are also in the backseat in politics and business, even though the law stipulates otherwise. While the constitution provides the quota system, claiming that women should occupy 30% of all government positions, the change has not yet taken place. In the area of access to business and property rights, legal solutions rank Kenya quite high, according to the World Bank's "Women, Business and the Law" 2012 report (p.102); nonetheless, at the practical level, women (especially unmarried ones) find it more difficult than men to access loans, more rarely inherit land and obtain education: 20% girls compared to nearly 40% boys obtain secondary education (HDR 2011, p.141). While both the current law in Kenya and women's organizations are in agreement that it should not be so, it will probably take time in the traditional, multi-tribe and largely rural society for the change to take place.

National context: Moldova

Moldova remains one of Europe's poorest countries with per capita GDP (PPP) of ca. USD 2,500 (est.) and population of ca. 4.3 mil. (rate of women to men is 1.08). The country does not possess any major natural resources and as much as 40% of labor force is employed in agriculture, with 16% working in industry and 43% in services. Moldova remains partly reliant on foreign aid, which constitutes slightly over 10% of its budget expenditures (Lozovanu and Girbu 2010, p.2). Moldova ranks 111th in the Human Development Index (HDI), which places it among Medium Human Development countries, having actually experienced a drop by two positions in the ranking in 2010-2011, resulting partly from the global economic crisis, which affected Moldova as a country reliant on foreign economic trade. In contrast to the low level of Human Development, Moldova ranks quite high in the UN Gender Inequality Index (46th) and Social Watch Gender Equity Index (21st).

Moldova has been experiencing a long political crisis, having been unable to elect a president for over two years (the previous president Vladimir Voronin's term expired in September 2009). On the other hand, Moldova has strong EU aspirations and has managed to implement some market oriented reforms and the first three-year Action Plan within the European Neighborhood Policy. Moldova has also been facing a frozen conflict since the breakaway of Transnistria after a military struggle in 1992.

The gender equality situation in Moldova continues to improve at the policy level. Moldova ratified CEDAW in 1994 and its constitution guarantees freedom from discrimination to all citizens. In 2006, The Law on Ensuring the Equality of Opportunities between Women and Men was adopted, specifying the institutional framework for gender equality. The Government of Moldova has also adopted the National Strategy on Gender Equality (NSGE), outlining the eight priority areas⁸ and key issues within each of them. The National Action Plan (NAP) for 2010-2015 followed the strategy, outlining particular activities and timeframes.⁹ Following the above regulations, revisions were also adopted in the national labor law, making it less restrictive for women. However, as Olga Sirbu from "Political Club of Women – 50/50" claims, the political changes in the area of equality are hampered by the slow pace of changes and insufficient resources.

Problems remain in the practical sphere as well. Gender roles are still considered relatively strong, resulting in limitations for women in different areas. One of the major problems is economic activity. While both women and men have experienced high unemployment rates, women generally experience more barriers in entering the labor market due to family obligations, lack of affordable childcare services, and discriminatory practices of employers, who find it preferable

8 Employment and labor migration, gender responsive budgeting, women's participation in political decision-making, social protection and the family, education, health care, violence and human trafficking, and raising public awareness (Cozzarelli 2011, p.19).

9 Several National Action Plans on Gender Equality were adopted previously, most recently for the years 2006-2009.

to employ men and are less likely to employ women who might potentially become pregnant (Cozzarelli 2011, p.32). Women also earn less than men (73.3%) and are less present in business, as only 27.5% of entrepreneurs are women (Acculai 2009, p.13). In politics, women are not equally represented and they constitute only 18% of the national parliament (a significant decrease from 28.5% during the previous term). The ratio is similar or lower in the local government and in the executive branch (Cozzarelli 2011, p.27). While Moldova continues to implement the National Reproductive Health Strategy for 2005-2015 (2005), concerns are also raised regarding sexual and reproductive rights, especially with regard to limited access to contraceptives and reproductive health services, which often aren't affordable, lack of sex education at schools, and difficulties in access to legal abortion. It is also important to note that Moldova remains the main regional source for women and girls being trafficked West and South.

The main body overseeing the implementation of gender equality issues in Moldova is the Department for Equal Opportunities and Prevention of Violence (DEO) at the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family; the actual implementation is funded through relevant ministries and external donors. The DEO also serves as secretariat to the Governmental Commission for Equality between Men and Women (GCE), a body comprised of representatives of ministries, which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of legal regulations and the NAP. Gender Focal Points are located in each ministry, and are currently being transformed into more advanced gender units and commissions.

CSOs and women's organizations are active in Moldova. There are at least five that have gender equality as their main focus and over 250 for which it is part of their activity. CSOs have an official representation at the GCE and, in general, they positively assess cooperation with the present government.

In brief, while the situation on gender equality in Moldova is developing in a rather positive way, there remains a lot to be done and major potential exists for external donors to cooperate both with the government and the local civil society in advancing it.

3.3. Policy in practice

3.3.1. Polish aid to Ghana, Kenya and Moldova

a) Polish aid to Sub-Saharan Africa (including Ghana and Kenya)

Poland's ties with Africa have not been very strong after 1989. Post-communist Poland's development cooperation with Africa dates back to 2001, three years before Poland's accession to the EU in 2004. As the 2003 Strategy of Polish Development Cooperation put it, "The choice of the priority directions of Polish development co-operation stems from the general objectives of Poland's foreign policy, and specific considerations [...]" (p.7). The Strategy, which has so far been the only strategic document of Polish Aid, did not refer to any particular geographic directions of Poland's development cooperation and, therefore, the aid to Africa was based not on particular political considerations but rather on the general global aid trends promoted by OECD (to which Poland acceded in 1996) and EU, as well as more incidental interests, reflected sometimes in the annual programs of Polish Aid (e.g. MSZ 2007a, p.11).

Initially, the bilateral aid was developed through projects financed directly by the Polish embassies, who donated funds to small projects in a multitude of Sub-Saharan countries.¹⁰ As the funding schemes of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs developed, in 2006, other actors, including development NGOs, also became involved in aid to Africa. Presently, aid for Africa is being programmed by the Department of Development Cooperation with support from the Department of Africa at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with support from Poland's embassies. Locally, the aid is overseen by Polish embassies, but it has to be noted that human resources for the aid are very limited; in Kenya, for instance, there is merely one employee who is only responsible part-time for overseeing aid in several countries.¹¹

The only two priority countries for Polish Aid in Africa have been Angola and Tanzania (2007-2008). Otherwise, aid was not focused on particular countries, but rather considered the region as a whole, with the regional scope ranging over time from Sub-Saharan Africa to all of Africa and Middle East. The chart below presents the level of aid to the region (as defined in particular year) allocated for projects implemented by Polish NGOs and other institutions; it does not include aid delivered by Polish embassies through small grants.

¹⁰ More information regarding aid delivered in Africa by Polish embassies can be found in Polish Aid annual reports, see: Bibliography.

¹¹ The embassy covers Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Somalia, Madagascar, Comoros, Seychelles, Burundi and Mauritius. Aid projects are not implemented in all of them.

Year	Region	Allocation	Comment
2007	Sub-Saharan Africa	EUR 320,000	Except for Angola and Tanzania
2008	Africa and the Middle East	EUR 1,600,000	Except for Angola and Tanzania
2009	Africa	EUR 1,350,000	Except for Angola, including embassy grants
2010	Sub-Saharan Africa	EUR 750,000	Except for Angola, including embassy grants
2011	Sub-Saharan Africa	EUR 800,000	Except for Angola

Source: Polish Aid annual programs. Approximations based on average exchange rate in particular year.

It is clear that the level of aid from Poland to Africa has been rather low, practically rarely exceeding 1 mil. EUR in any given year. It is important to note that while the aid level in 2008 and 2009 was slightly higher, both its geographical scope was broader (including North Africa, as well as Middle East in 2008), and some of the funds were dedicated to civilian activities of the Polish military contingent in Chad (EUFOR) (MSZ 2009b, p.13). The aid to Ghana and Kenya has normally been a fraction of the whole budget:

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Kenya	EUR 111,000	EUR 213,000	EUR 64,000	EUR 50,000	EUR 45,000
Ghana	-	EUR 125,000	EUR 40,000	EUR 64,000	EUR 58,000

Source: Results of Polish Aid calls for proposals. Approximations based on average exchange rate in particular year.

As the independent AidWatch report prepared by Zagranica Group, coalition of Polish NGOs, puts it, “[d]eclarations and colorful pictures [in annual Polish Aid reports] are not followed by concrete decisions regarding financial allocations for African countries within Polish bilateral aid, nor regarding strategic sectors of assistance for particular priority countries” (Grupa Zagranica 2009, p.16).

Regardless of the MDGs and global trends, gender equality or women’s rights have never been a priority issue in Polish aid to Africa. Priority topics for Sub-Saharan Africa were slightly modified from one year to the next, but they mainly focused on basic services, like access to clean water, education and health care, as well as rural development, development of human resources and environmental protection; since the overall level of aid is relatively small, no allocations for particular priorities have been defined (see: Polish Aid annual programs). Projects funded in Africa have mostly focused on education (and basic infrastructure, like construction or restoration of

schools), access to clean water and health care. Bearing in mind that no horizontal gender-related priorities are in place and there exists no gender mainstreaming policy within Polish Aid, it can be concluded that gender issues are absent from the process of planning aid to Africa.

Since no evaluation has been conducted of how Polish aid money is spent in Kenya and Ghana, or Africa at large, it is practically impossible to establish whether they have had much effect. The relatively small amount of funds for Africa, which is then still divided among several different countries, makes the actual level of aid for a particular country like Kenya or Ghana so small that it may be considered impossible to recognize its impact in the context of the country's own strategies, as well as other donors' activities. Moreover, grants awarded by Polish Aid may only be spent within the fiscal year (until the end of the year in which money was granted), so projects are usually short (7-9 months) and they lack a long term perspective or continuation, which further complicates pursuing long-term strategic objectives or evaluating their achievements and impact.

Polish CSOs have long continued to call for increasing funds for aid to Africa, introduction of strategic planning, as well as for taking into account the MDG perspective, but to little avail. Little attention, however, was devoted to introducing gender-related priorities in Polish development cooperation with Africa. While, since 2007, a shift has taken place and democratization disappeared from priority list in Sub-Saharan Africa, leaving more space to basic services and to what might be considered poverty reduction, no attention has been paid to considering the situation of women in the least developed African Countries, nor to considering gender equality a cross-cutting issue and mainstreaming gender in development projects.

b) Polish aid to Moldova

Moldova has been a priority country for Polish Aid since 2004. According to the Polish Aid program for 2007, "Moldova is still one of the poorest countries in Europe. Its national income and other development indicators are low [...]. Moldova's location in the proximity of Poland and its problems with systemic transformation have induced Poland to treat Moldova as a priority recipient of Polish assistance in the medium and long term" (MSZ 2007a, p.9). Since 2008, aid priorities to Moldova have been largely influenced by the debates within the Polish-Moldovan Forum for European Integration, assembling both countries' key ministers. So far, three meetings of the Forum have taken place and, according to the annual programs, they have largely influenced the priorities of Polish Aid.

The priority topics of Polish Aid for Moldova have been gradually narrowed down from its beginnings in 2004, when they encompassed a very broad range of topics under the main direction of supporting European integration and economic changes, as well as market processes and entrepreneurship. In the following years other priority areas were added, like support for civil society (in 2005), and the former ones became more precise (e.g. public administration reform in preparation for European integration). Since 2006, rural development has become an important priority and entrepreneurship was further defined as support for the development of small and medium enterprises (SME). As of 2010, good governance became a priority topic, more in line with the EU priorities for Moldova,¹² and Polish priority issues in aid for Moldova became more or less stable in the following year, including: (1) good governance (including fighting corruption, public finance management, self governance, communal services and other topics within the Eastern Partnership initiative), (2) migration and border management, (3) agriculture and rural development, and (4) development of the small and medium enterprises sector. Projects funded over the years were implemented mostly in the area of improved local governance and development of rural regions, including micro-entrepreneurship development.

Even though Moldova is a priority country for Polish aid, funding has not been excessive:

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
EUR 900,000	EUR 1,150,000	EUR 600,000 *	EUR 500,000 *	EUR 900,000

* Including small grants delivered via Polish embassies. Approximations based on average exchange rate in particular year.

Source: Polish Aid annual programs.

The number of projects implemented usually ranged from around a dozen to as many as 26 in 2008. In 2009 and 2010 respectively, 15 and 13 projects were implemented.

¹² EU priorities for Moldova are reforms in the Moldovan social sector, public health reform, improving the justice system, prevention of drug abuse, law enforcement and border management.



Over the years, no budget was allocated for gender equality nor women's rights, nor for any priority topics related directly to supporting women in the area of empowerment or poverty alleviation. According to Przemysław Bobak, former desk officer for Moldova at the MFA Eastern Department, this results partly from the fact that Moldovan partners (official institutions consulted by territorial departments) do not emphasize gender equality issues as an important development priority. No data is available regarding the effectiveness of this aid, particularly in the area of gender equality. The outcome of the projects is usually only being followed by the implementing organizations, and since no funds are available for the evaluation of projects and funding normally ends by the end of the year (together with the project), assessing the projects' outcomes or impact is not normally practiced.

No particular reservations or comments have been raised by NGOs and other institutions working in Moldova regarding the annual priorities, and one may suppose that in general they reflect the scope and the level of NGOs' interest in this country.



3.3.2. Presentation of project analyses for Ghana, Kenya and Moldova

a) Analysis of Ghana based project

Polish Green Network, “Technical and material support for the development of rural regions of Tafi-Todzi, Ghana”

Budget: ca. EUR 50,000 (2008 project)

The project “Technical and material support for the development of rural regions of Tafi-Todzi, Ghana”, selected for analysis for Ghana, was implemented by the Polish Green Network (PGN) in the second half of 2008. The project was funded by Polish Aid with some co-funding from private sources. The project was selected for analysis as it had a broad focus on rural development, which normally would necessitate a gender analysis of the situation, and therefore some reflection on gender equality was expected from the implementers. Moreover, the project implementing organization, Polish Green Network, is one of the leading Polish development NGOs, one of the few that implement projects funded by EuropeAid.

Within this research, it was established that, unusually for projects funded by Polish aid, this project constituted one module of a five-year program implemented in the Volta region of Ghana.¹³ The overall involvement was based on a 5-year strategy focusing on rural development of the target region. Therefore, the present analysis focuses on the broader 5-year program, occasionally referring to the 2008 project.

Although projects were implemented in cooperation with a local partner, Friends of the Earth Ghana, and planned together with the partner, the 5-year strategy was developed mostly by Polish experts, who used the first project period (2006) to conduct research on the site, conducting consultations with local stakeholders (traditional and formal authorities and public opinion leaders), as well as studying regional data and district development strategies and conducting expert research on conditions for agriculture in the Volta region in cooperation with the West Pomeranian University of Technology (PZS 2008, p.5).

According to Aleksandra Antonowicz, the project coordinator, the program’s objectives were centered on rural development of the Tafi Todzi regions in Ghana and they were based on the Millennium Development Goals. The main objectives were related to MDGs no. 1 (eradicating extreme poverty), 2 (universal primary education), 4 and 5 (reducing infant mortality and

¹³ Polish Aid does not support projects that take longer than one year, nor does it in any way guarantee funding for project continuation. Experimental two-year financing is supposed to be introduced in 2012.

improving maternal health), 6 (combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases), and 7 (ensure environmental sustainability). While women are generally considered one of key target groups in rural development cooperation with Africa, MDG no. 3 (promoting gender equality and women's empowerment) was omitted from the strategy, although it was emphasized that "it is important to provide women with alternative income opportunities" (PZS 2008, p.13). The gender aspect of MDG no. 2 was also omitted, stipulating that access to education should focus on "boys and girls alike". As a result, no gender equality related goals were defined in the initial action plan, apart from actions referring to "cooperation with local districts regarding possible actions for improving maternal health" (PZS 2008, p.24).

Program implementation built upon the strategy and action plan. In particular, actions implemented within the program were focused on two main areas: infrastructural development and building capacity for development of local entrepreneurship. Within the first area, a school was built for 180 children, as well as three wells, serving up to 2,000 persons from two communities. Within the second area, trainings and mentoring were held for farmers (developing pineapple plantations), beekeepers and women entrepreneurs. There were two groups of farmers and two of beekeepers, each comprised of ca. 15 persons. There were normally 2-3 women per group and recruitment to groups was open, regardless of sex; no particular measures were taken to attract women. The groups underwent the training cycles and received material support to implement the acquired knowledge in their own business.

There were also two groups of women (ca. 20 persons each) that underwent training on micro-business issues (run by local trainers), established associations (producer groups) and were supplied with some start-up money to produce materials with traditional ornaments. While trainings for women continued for two years (2008-2009), the implementing organization claims that the women had too little initial competence and although they were supported by local trainers and managed to launch production, they did not succeed in finding the market for their product. Therefore, while the associations continue to function, they are far from being successful businesses.

While, as described above, the program did include actions targeted directly at women – developing women entrepreneurship – gender equality was not an objective of the project, nor was it mainstreamed. According to Aleksandra Antonowicz, the traditional division of gender roles in the target region did not allow space for gender mainstreaming and the implementation of the project and its components targeted at women was actually the first step in talking about the role of women in the community. The program itself, however, when it applied to women, focused on providing them with the ability to earn money rather than providing them with any tools for building their position in the community.

No in-depth evaluation has been conducted on the project and only speculations may be made regarding its impact on gender equality. One may assume that the new wells made

access to water easier for women, and that trainings provided them with some opportunity to improve their economic situation. Similarly, while the school constructed within the project also accommodates girls, there is no data regarding their number, as the activities were not planned to involve girls on an equal basis. In the longer perspective, it seems that the project did also strengthen the role of women in the two communities where women's associations were created. Aleksandra Antonowicz explains that the feedback received from the community leaders is that those active women started attending community meetings and actually take the floor during those meetings. Therefore, apparently, the sole fact of becoming actors of their own development raised their level of self-confidence, thus contributing positively (though in an unplanned way) to women's empowerment in the focus region.

b) Analysis of Kenya based project

Poland-East Africa Economic Foundation "Center for professional activation and social integration of street children in Kawangware slum, Nairobi, Kenya"

Budget: ca. EUR 60,000

The project "Center for professional activation and social integration of street children in Kawangware slum, Nairobi, Kenya", selected for analysis for Kenya, was implemented in May-December 2009. The project was selected for analysis firstly because it was implemented by a small but very active organization, which has carried out a number of different projects in Kenya and other countries, and recently (2011) was implementing projects in cooperation with local women's organizations from Burundi. It was therefore assumed that it may have a unique perception of women's problems. Moreover, focus on social integration normally involves introduction of gender equality measures.

It was based on an existing ecological paper manufacture (operated by a local self-help group and employing slum youth) and aimed to build a center and thus establish a physical space both for this manufacture, previously operating on the street, and for other local initiatives. "We wanted to establish a 'cultural center' in the slum", says Aleksandra Mielcarz, project coordinator, "initially for the youth but ultimately for anyone interested. It's a place of opportunity". The Polish Aid funded project was focused on infrastructure (the center premises), and additional activities around the center were considered complementary. While the implementing organization did intend for women's groups to use the center (both through trainings and space), the project did not include defined gender-related objectives.

The implementing organization has been involved in Kenya since 2008, using mostly funds from Polish Aid and its own resources. A local self-help group from the Kawangware slum was a partner in the project. The group is comprised of two men and two women. The group was started by a local leader back in 2002 and it operated as a street manufacture, producing bags, postcards, business cards, etc. from recycled paper. Within the manufacture, participants receive food, basic healthcare and some pocket money. Some younger participants are also sent to school. In the pre-project period, the manufacture comprised almost exclusively of boys, which later changed during and after the project. The decision to implement the project was made and the planning process was conducted together with the local leader and his closest coworkers; this took place throughout 2008. UN Habitat report and the National Census of 1999 were the basic data sources for the projects and they did not include sex-disaggregated data, which only became available in the 2009 Census.

The objective of the project was to build the premises of the cultural center, to host both the manufacture and any other self-help groups, which are very active in the Kawangware slum. The intended longer-term impact was twofold: Firstly, the manufacture would have its own space, where it could develop and grow; secondly, the center would act as a place where different activities and trainings influencing the local community could be held. The center has no permanent agenda but rather can be used by different local groups and NGOs when needed. The center was also designed to be self-sustainable financially through running different income-generating activities (e.g. internet café) and the implementing organization did not continue direct involvement after building the center, leaving it to local ownership and management by the project partner.

The results of the project within the implementation period included establishing the center, hosting a number of trainings,¹⁴ and developing the manufacture, which grew from 20 persons – almost exclusively boys – to 46, almost equally divided between girls and boys. Moreover, the manufacture was expanded by a group of 25 single mothers (the number has grown to 36 by 2011). The activities taking place in the center also included micro-business trainings for women.¹⁵

Gender was not a formal objective of the project, nor was it mainstreamed throughout the project. On the other hand, it was certainly not ignored. “We wanted to open the place up for girls”, says Aleksandra Mielcarz. “That’s why we opened the center to different professional trainings. Then we found out there were NGOs with specialized offer for women and [established cooperation]. Unfortunately, girls are not that open.” While the manufacture members were mostly boys, the implementers sought ways to bring also women and girls in and hopefully encourage them to become more involved in other activities at the center (while boys are on the streets in the slum, girls are not, and clever ways of encouraging them are necessary). Therefore,

¹⁴ Detailed data on trainings is not available, since different organizations were allowed to use the space for their own purposes.

¹⁵ At least 40 women were trained in the center during project implementation in trainings directed to women; there is no data regarding how many participated in general (open to both women & men) trainings. Information based upon interview with Aleksandra Mielcarz.

relations with local organizations that work with women and girls were established, and courses for them were offered in the center. Should the planning process have started much earlier, it would have probably been possible to better engage girls in the project activities; it is therefore important to build the capacity of implementing organizations in gender sensitive planning.

The implementers claim that the project did indeed impact gender equality through better involvement of women in economic and social activity. This impact, however, is limited only to the area nearest to the center, where participants of the manufacture and trainings reside. The implementers argue that, bearing in mind the small scale of funding from Polish Aid, its lack of predictability and the fact that projects need to be implemented in a very limited timeframe (normally 7 to 9 months), it is impossible to either achieve impact (including impact on gender equality) or plan it strategically, as well as to implement long-term organizational policies on issues like gender – simply because there is no guarantee that those policies or strategies can be implemented. “We try to be close to local initiatives and follow their needs”, says Aleksandra Mielcarz. “We do not have a clear gender policy, because we do not want to limit ourselves. When we come across an initiative benefiting only men, which will still develop the local community – we will do it, too. We may be considering gender equality but it’s a secondary issue, because our scale of operation is too small.” While the concept of ‘limiting oneself’ is related to a standard misunderstanding of gender equality as tantamount to gender balance (50/50), it is true that since projects funded from Polish Aid may only respond to small, local problems that can be dealt with over a short period of time, there is hardly ever a chance for strategic planning, continuation, follow-up, or evaluation. Therefore, the implementers’ argument that while they deeply care for women’s empowerment through their projects, it is impossible to build the institutional potential to mainstream gender equality in the work of the organization due to shortage of resources, seems valid. Yet, it is also a clear sign that both the institutional capacity of NGOs in the area of gender equality needs to be further developed, and the unpredictable short-term funding from Polish Aid has a negative effect on the presence of gender equality in Polish development projects.

c) Analysis of Moldova based project

Pomeranian Agricultural Advisory Center (PODR) “Stare Pole”, “The influence of agricultural consulting on the development of agriculture and entrepreneurship in the rural areas of Moldova”

The project “The influence of agricultural consulting on the development of agriculture and entrepreneurship in the rural areas of Moldova” was implemented in June-December 2008 and it focused on strengthening the capacity of agricultural consultants and advisors. The project was selected for analysis because it was implemented in the area of agricultural development, where there is a lot of potential and need for promoting gender equality, and because it was implemented by a local government institution, coming from a different background than development CSOs. Therefore, it was interesting to see how gender equality is perceived and implemented in such context.

The project took place as one in a series within long-term cooperation with a Moldovan partner, an agricultural consulting agency, which started in 2007 and has continued to this day. No gender-related objectives were defined in the project, although it was assumed that women-farmers would also participate. The project was funded by Polish Aid.

PODR “Stare Pole” has been involved in Moldova since 2007, normally implementing one project per year, funded by Polish Aid. All projects are implemented in cooperation with the same partner – ACSA (National Agency for Rural Development), based in Chisinau, thus establishing a longer cooperation focused on rural development in Moldova.¹⁶ Project planning is done in close cooperation with the partner and based on the partner’s expertise and data (the partner is involved in agricultural consulting for Moldovan partners on a statutory basis). No formal consultations with local communities or women’s organizations are held; the partner bases their knowledge on information drawn from regular cooperation with local partners. The planning modus operandi, implemented yearly, is that a workshop is organized with representatives of both organizations (mostly men), during which the participants develop ideas for the project and decisions are taken together.

The overall objective of the project was to support the process of reforming and modernizing agriculture in Moldova, as well as to stimulate rural entrepreneurship through building up the capacity of rural human resources. The direct objectives of the project were (1) training, information and advisory support for Moldovan agricultural consulting services in the area of competitive agricultural market, WTO/EU standards for agricultural markets, agricultural management, (2) training and advisory support for Moldovan agricultural consulting services

¹⁶ In 2007-2011, PODR “Stare Pole” implemented 5 projects in Moldova as lead and two more as partner, all of them in cooperation with ACSA.

regarding effective methods and consulting tools in the area of new technologies in agriculture and rural entrepreneurship, including agritourism, and (3) inspiring, motivating and activating local communities towards participation (leadership) in changes in the rural areas. The project targeted rural advisors and farmers in Moldova.¹⁷

The main activities within the project were trainings conducted in Poland for two 30-person groups of rural advisors from Moldova, as well as a study tour of 8 Polish experts, and a conference in Moldova and two other conferences with Moldovan participants in Poland and Ukraine. The key activity directed at the project beneficiaries were the two sets of 14-day trainings on the competitiveness of agricultural markets and products (July 2008), and on agriculture and small entrepreneurship including agritourism (August 2008). The project was directed at both men and women; therefore, within the 30-person groups participating in each training, 8 women participated in the first training and 11 women participated in the second training.

Gender was not an objective of the project and was not mainstreamed through the project. While the project is formally targeted both to women and men, there were no particular methods of influencing equality and no particular gender equality measures were implemented when recruiting project participants. In the case of rural advisors (who are the main target group of the project), the group is basically fixed and comprised of employees of the partner organization, who are, in general, men. On the other hand, women farmers were free to apply and participate in the trainings and, as described above, 19 out of 60 participants were indeed women. Slightly more women (11 out of 30 compared to 8 out of 30) participated in trainings related to entrepreneurship and agritourism, which, according to Teresa Krakowska, results from their higher interest in those topics. It is important to note, however, that this did not result from conscious gender-sensitive planning, but rather from the fact that external recruitment was open to interested farmers regardless of whether they were men or women.

According to Teresa Krakowska, some impact in the area of women's empowerment has been achieved: for many women the opportunity to participate in trainings in Poland was their first opportunity to go abroad and thus gain a broader perspective, becoming more conscious participants of communities back home. Other women have also learned more about agritourism and then started their own businesses as hosts of rural tourism enterprises.

According to Teresa Krakowska, the Polish implementing organization has also become more sensitive to women's empowerment issues and their 2011 project in Moldova (with the same partner) included a series of trainings directed to women, focused on tourism and regional production ("Role of women in entrepreneurship development broadening alternative sources of income in rural areas of Moldova"), in which women constituted 20 out of 30 participants.¹⁸

17 Project documentation made available by PODR "Stare Pole".

18 Project documentation made available by PODR "Stare Pole".

In general, the Polish implementing organization lacks expertise or strategy in the area of gender equality. While, according to Teresa Krakowska, they are sensitive to the issue of women in development and realize that investing in empowerment and more equal involvement of women may have a positive development impact, they lack the resources, knowledge and potential to consider mainstreaming gender equality issues in their international development operations.



3.4. Comparing policy and practice: key findings

The politics and administration of Polish Aid

Gender equality is generally considered to be a crucial concept in international development. It is reflected in many international commitments and prioritized in international agreements and national policies. Little of this, unfortunately, is reflected in Polish development cooperation. Gender issues are practically absent from both policy and implementation levels. There are no legal regulations regarding gender in development policy, no strategies and no instruments for ensuring its presence. Nor are there gender mainstreaming mechanisms in place within Polish Aid. The list of reasons for this state of affairs is broad.

Chaotic development aid system

Firstly, Polish aid system has no strategy nor is it predictable in the longer perspective, making it very difficult to implement any topical or cross-cutting long-term policies. Only in 2011 did Poland adopt the Law on Development Cooperation – a very general act, the gist of which was to make multi-annual planning and financing possible, as well as to move development cooperation funding from budget reserve to the main state budget. The Law will only become effective in 2012 and it is currently impossible to predict whether it will lead to any major changes. Until now, Polish development cooperation has been liable to one-year planning and unstable development priorities, as well as largely dependent on the current team of decision makers and civil servants. Moreover, development cooperation has been perceived mainly as a tool in the Polish foreign policy, rather than an instrument of global responsibility and poverty reduction. Since gender equality is not normally considered a matter of realizing direct political interests, its prioritization in line with international commitments has fallen victim to the underdeveloped system of Polish Aid alongside such crucial, cross-cutting matters as, for instance, effectiveness, or the practice of monitoring and evaluation.

Political will

The reasons for the lack of comprehensive, functional and stable system of Polish aid, and, therefore, the lack of gender issues therein, lie mostly with the decision makers. The works on the law on Polish aid have been in progress since 2006, with several drafts and many consultations held with development CSOs. None of them, however, has gone through the council of ministers

and to the parliament. Only in 2011, the year of Polish presidency at the EU Council, was it finally possible to push the Law through and finally adopt it. The decision makers have not considered development cooperation crucial and so the system has been, and so far continues to be, crippled. Political will on the highest levels is necessary both for the system to develop and function well, and for gender equality to become established as a cross-cutting objective in all development cooperation efforts.

Another reason for gender equality not being present in Polish development cooperation is that it is not prioritized as a policy in Polish administration or politics in general. While formal mechanisms exist, like the “Law on implementation of certain regulations of the European Union regarding Equal Treatment” of 2010, or the position of the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment, women’s organizations have regularly expressed their concerns regarding the effectiveness of those mechanisms and they continue to argue that gender equality is not a cross-cutting issue in shaping policies and institutions. If effective political instruments of gender mainstreaming and providing equal opportunities are not present at the country level, the culture of discrediting gender equality will continue. A particular danger to equality in Polish development cooperation is that while changes may take place within the Polish Aid system, they will be based solely on current context and probably not sustainable over the future political changes.

Programming and implementing development cooperation

Gender equality is not prioritized at the administration level in Polish development cooperation. In fact, it is hardly present at all.

The Department of Development Cooperation at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is responsible for programming Polish Aid, has a lot of freedom in proposing priority topics and sectors of Polish Aid. Nonetheless, as mentioned above, the support priorities in development cooperation are hardly ever related to women’s rights and empowerment. While it can partly be explained by the lack of strategic prioritization of gender equality issues, another reason which must be considered is the lack of support for the concept from the department and ministry leadership, resulting at least partly from the lack of understanding of the concept and its importance for effective development cooperation.

Gender perspective is also absent from the implementation of development cooperation. In the Department for Implementation of Development Programs, responsible directly for managing calls for applications, the only tool related to gender equality is one item in the grant application form, regarding non-discrimination (considered as a general issue). There is, however, no expert on gender issues within the assessors’ committee, so even that opportunity for pushing gender equality in applications is lost. Moreover, no guidelines whatsoever exist for applicants regarding

mainstreaming gender issues in projects, nor is there any system of evaluation in place, which might allow for assessing the actual impact of Polish Aid financed projects in gender equality.

Summary

To sum up, neither of the two tracks is systematically present in Polish development cooperation. The system in general lacks framework in terms of both legal regulations and strategic planning. Gender mainstreaming is not implemented and women's empowerment is hardly ever considered a priority. This stems from the lack of political will or strong mechanisms ensuring the adherence to the commitments made by Polish governments, but also, apparently, from misunderstanding the concept and importance of prioritizing gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment in development cooperation. It is therefore important to influence both the decision makers and civil servants through advocacy and education, to ensure that gender equality becomes rooted in Polish development cooperation in a systemic way.

Implementing organizations

The situation is slightly different with implementing organizations of Polish Aid (NGOs and other government, local government and academic institutions). The implementers display a much higher sensitivity to women's problems in developing countries and claim that they are open to addressing them. When it comes to actual implementation, however, the situation becomes much less optimistic.

Firstly, there is a general lack of comprehension of what gender equality refers to and it is often mistaken for gender balance. Women's empowerment is better comprehended and there are projects implemented in this area,¹⁹ although there are not many of them, due to the lack of relevant priorities in annual programs and calls for proposals. Gender mainstreaming, however, is practically absent from the Polish Aid funded projects.

Secondly, even the organizations willing to prioritize gender mainstreaming in their work find it extremely difficult. Polish aid system does not foster any cross-cutting or long term organizational policies, of which gender mainstreaming is just one example. Apart from the lack of stable, multi-annual financing, there are also no funds available for building institutional capacity. As Aleksandra Mielcarz claims, "We would like to have a gender policy in our organization but we are not able to plan anything long-term".

¹⁹ E.g. by two of the organizations in this research – Stare Pole and Poland-East Africa Economic Foundation.

Institutional capacity is also absent from the area of needs assessment and project planning, disallowing the organizations to conduct gender analysis before implementing the project. The reason for this is threefold: (1) lack of funding at the project planning stage,²⁰ (2) lack of possibility to conduct research before or during the initial stages of the project (because realistically projects only last up to 9 months), and (3) lack of competent experts within the organizations and available on the market. The latter is further reinforced by big staff mobility – due to unstable financing, people often change jobs or move away from the development sector altogether.²¹

Implementing organizations, especially CSOs who are more prone to change than government and local government institutions, are not encouraged to prioritize gender equality in their work through campaigning and education, nor through support and competence building. Women's organizations dealing with development cooperation should promote gender policies through the national platform and other platforms of cooperation and work towards building strong support for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment among the CSOs and other implementers. It is important, however, to understand that while it is key to build such support around pressuring the donor on gender issues, it is the donor's strong commitment and implementation mechanisms that will actually bring about the change, and it is not until the donor demands gender mainstreaming and prioritize gender issues that it will become a standard practice among Polish implementing organizations.

Key findings

Gender equality is practically absent from Polish development cooperation. Moreover, it is not recognized as crucial to development, either by decision makers and civil servants, or, in general, by civil society and other institutions implementing Polish Aid projects. The global debate on the role of women in development finds little reflection in the Polish discourse on aid and in the practical reality of aid projects. There are few topical priorities of aid to focus countries that concentrate on women's empowerment, and mainstreaming gender equality is simply not there, absent both from policies and mechanisms of development cooperation. While NGOs seem sensitive to the problems of women, they have little capacity to develop strategies and projects that might actually produce some impact; this stems from the lack of both the necessary expertise and the resources (human, financial, and time). The situation, therefore, seems rather grim. Nonetheless, there seem to be some opportunities for fostering introduction of gender equality issues into Polish development cooperation.

20 Polish Aid funds are granted strictly for project purposes; there are no overheads and no funds are normally granted for pre-implementation research.

21 Two other organizations that were to be interviewed within this project on the subject of their projects in 2009 and 2008 could not provide any valid information, because project managers have changed jobs and taken their knowledge of the projects with them.

The conclusions of this research may best be presented based on a brief SWOT analysis:

Strengths

- 🌐 Poland has committed to introducing and promoting gender equality as a member of the EU and signatory of international treaties; as such, it is liable to external control and mechanisms ensuring its adherence to commitments, so there exist potential allies;
- 🌐 Development NGOs in general are sensitive about problems facing women in developing countries;*
- 🌐 Some of the civil servants dealing with aid are sensitive about gender issues and believe those issues should be given more attention.

Weaknesses

- 🌐 Gender equality issues are not visibly present in the Polish aid system;
- 🌐 The aid system lacks a solid framework and stability;
- 🌐 Polish aid system so far has not incorporated practically any cross-cutting long term policies (not only regarding gender) and the culture of building the system on such policies and strategies does not exist;
- 🌐 There is a lack of competence regarding gender equality both within the administration and the implementers of Polish Aid;
- 🌐 There is a lack of comprehension within administration and implementers of Polish aid regarding the question why gender equality and women's empowerment are central to development;
- 🌐 Very few NGOs in Poland are implementing gender mainstreaming in their development cooperation (none have been identified in this research, although this is not conclusive);
- 🌐 The capacity of implementing organizations in the area of implementing gender equality in planning, budgeting and actual cooperation is very low;
- 🌐 So far, women's organizations have not been able to effectively communicate and promote a gender focused approach to development; they have, therefore, few allies within the NGO sector in advocating such approach with administration and decision makers;
- 🌐 With no such formal requirements from the top, development CSOs are not motivated to push for gender mainstreaming, because it would constitute yet another obligation and they already lack resources and capacity;
- 🌐 At this point, practically only women's organizations are strongly convinced that there is a need to work towards prioritizing gender perspective in Polish development cooperation and no broader coalition focused on this objective exists.

Opportunities

- 🌐 Polish Aid system is in the making and there are opportunities for advocating a more central role of gender equality within this system;
- 🌐 The planned introduction of multi-annual financing within Polish Aid may provide implementers of Polish Aid funded projects with the opportunity to think and plan more strategically for improved impact;
- 🌐 The multi-annual Polish Aid action plan is in the process of being prepared; it can therefore still be influenced;
- 🌐 Due to the presumed sensitivity of NGOs and other Polish Aid implementers, as well as some civil servants, to problems of women in development, there exist opportunities for training and capacity building in this area;
- 🌐 Zaganica Group, the national platform of development NGOs, has two members who are women's organizations involved in development, and is generally open to making gender part of its dialogue with decision makers.

Threats

- 🌐 There are many factors that influence the shaping of the Polish aid system, including political factors, that may prove stronger than advocacy efforts undertaken by women's organizations and development NGOs;
- 🌐 Development NGOs in Zaganica Group may decide not to support gender-focused advocacy;
- 🌐 Since competence in the area of gender equality is not mandatory for Polish aid, NGOs and other implementers may decide that they do not need it or do not have enough resources (e.g. time) to obtain it.

* assessment based on interviews with implementers of Polish Aid funded projects

On the one hand, the weaknesses are much more visible and better established than the strengths. On the other hand, there seem to be a number of opportunities to promote gender equality in Polish development cooperation. The following chapter presents recommendations for different actors. It is, however, necessary to note the key role of women's organizations and their allies in keeping the debate alive and introducing gender perspective in development on many levels through advocacy and campaigning, as well as through consistently bringing up the issue and demanding that it is taken into account in the dialogue on development between the government and implementing organizations on a regular basis.

Polish government should start considering gender equality in development cooperation as an important, if not central, issue, in line with the EU and international commitments, and undertaking actions resulting from this approach, following the twin-track approach proposed

by the EC. It should also work to develop a stable and predictable system of development cooperation, promoting long-term, strategic thinking and providing multi-annual predictability and funding.

Women's organizations are practically the only actor dedicated to promoting gender perspective as central to development cooperation. Therefore, they should continue to raise awareness of the government and NGOs in the area of women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming as a central issue of development cooperation, and at the same time support the process on implementation and expert level.

NGOs and other implementers of Polish Aid should become more gender-sensitive in their activities, taking into account that gender equality is central to effective, sustainable development and that it does not only refer to projects focusing on empowering women, but also to providing them with equal access to other projects and development opportunities.

The EU and partner countries of Polish Aid may also have a strong influence on prioritizing gender equality in Polish development cooperation by exerting pressure in the area of policy making and programming.

4. Recommendations

Addressed to the Polish government (decision makers and administration)

In the area of policy and legal matters:

- 🌐 Develop an approach to gender equality based on EU and international commitments, reflected in policies, strategies and action plans related to development cooperation.

In the area of programming the development cooperation:

- 🌐 Program aid based on the policies, strategies and action plans reflecting Poland's EU commitments in the area of gender equality, in a way that enables its effective implementation;
- 🌐 Introduce an easily accessible system of multi-annual financing of projects, which would allow for more consistent planning of impact and for evaluating and correcting actions over at least three one-year periods;
- 🌐 Introduce mechanisms for promoting gender mainstreaming in development projects implemented by development NGOs (e.g. obligatory gender analysis of the planned projects in line with the twin-track approach);
- 🌐 Increase the number of topical priorities related to women's empowerment in focus countries in line with the twin-track approach;
- 🌐 Introduce mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, specifically in the area of impact on gender equality in Polish Aid funded projects.

In the area of capacity building:

- 🌐 Build capacity of MFA employees responsible for aid to better comprehend what gender equality is in development cooperation;
- 🌐 Foster capacity building in implementing organizations and institutions of Polish aid in the area of gender equality by providing support in obtaining necessary competence (trainings, guidebooks, etc.), and resources (financial or other);
- 🌐 Work towards achieving greater sensitivity regarding gender equality among Polish Aid implementers through e.g. benchmarking, championing, or awards for projects that best incorporate gender equality.

In the area of cooperation with other actors:

- 🌐 Engage in cooperation with women's organizations working in the area of development to achieve greater effectiveness in developing tools to promote gender equality in Polish Aid and to positively influence both the system and implementers of Polish Aid in the competence area;
- 🌐 Conduct a more in-depth needs assessment in the area of women's empowerment in dialogue with partner countries.

Addressed to women's organizations

In the area of cooperation among civil society organizations:

- 🌐 Build partnerships between women's organizations and development NGOs to promote gender equality as an issue central to development cooperation, potentially using the national NGDO platform Grupa Zagranica;
- 🌐 Women's organizations need to develop a coherent communication strategy and build simple messages on why gender equality is central to effective development cooperation.

In the area of development and expertise:

- 🌐 Provide expert and educational support to NGOs willing to develop gender strategies and/or to mainstream gender in their actions, and assist them in developing tools and mechanisms that would foster that; one way to achieve that would be a gender mainstreaming helpdesk for organizations writing grant applications or interested in introducing gender mainstreaming as a horizontal objective within their operations.

In the area of campaigning:

- 🌐 Implement intense advocacy and educational campaigns directed at decision makers to increase their awareness of the importance of gender equality in development cooperation;
- 🌐 Mainstream the gender perspective consistently in debates related to development cooperation both within the NGO/implementers sector and in its dialogue with the government;
- 🌐 Engage in regular consultations with women's organizations and other CSOs from focus countries of Polish Aid and use their support to advocate gender-related topical priorities with the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Addressed to NGOs and other implementing organizations of Polish Aid

- 🌐 Build competence of their employees in the area of gender equality;
- 🌐 Prioritize gender mainstreaming in their work as a cross-cutting issue in all strategic planning;
- 🌐 Initiate cooperation with women's organizations in partner countries and perform at least basic research on gender equality situation and actual reasons for inequality, as well as develop ways of overcoming them to achieve actual equal opportunities for women and men in access to their projects;
- 🌐 Support the national NGDO platform Grupa Zagranica in advocating gender issues in Polish development cooperation.

Addressed to external partners (esp. EU and partner countries)

- 🌐 Develop and use mechanisms ensuring adherence to the commitments made by the Polish governments in the area of gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment, with focus on poverty reduction;
- 🌐 Encourage the Polish government to better cooperate in the area of gender equality based on the internal strategies of the particular partner countries.

Conclusions

This report set out with a threefold objective:

1. To gather solid evidence about how Polish policy commitments to gender equality in development cooperation are being translated into action;
2. To ensure that recipients of Polish Development Cooperation in the Global South express their views on what needs to be done to ensure that gender equality policies are fully implemented;
3. To formulate sound recommendations to push for putting gender equality at the centre of the Polish development cooperation and to strengthen an enabling environment for CSOs to deliver on gender equality in Polish development cooperation.

The research on which the report was based revealed that policy commitments are practically not translated into action. While there is a lot of potential for Polish organizations and other institutions involved in development cooperation, and valuable sources of information that can be consulted exist in focus partner countries, it is usually difficult to implement the needs that they express, considering the low capacity of Polish development actors and the unstable, short-term funding system of Polish Aid, which inhibits strategic thinking and planning for significant impacts on gender equality.

The report presents a set of recommendations, based on interviews with different stakeholders. Some of them are quite precise, but most are far-reaching. The problem with putting gender equality at the center of the Polish development cooperation is related to the fact that with the general lack of aid strategy and policy in Poland, it is difficult to define where such a center might be. Similarly, the enabling environment for CSOs has very serious limitations not just in the area of gender equality, but on the whole, preventing CSOs from building potential to achieve any impact, not just in this particular area. Therefore, while action needs to be undertaken at the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and there are ways of improving the current situation, it is also important to advocate the establishing of functional, cross-cutting gender equality policies and mechanisms at the national policymaking level.

The findings of this report show how far behind Poland is in the area of gender equality in development cooperation, in light of its 7 years of membership in the European Union. At the same time, they offer some hope: in this period of shaping the development cooperation system, it is still possible to exert strong influence through advocacy, campaigning and capacity building. The will often exists at the implementation level, both among civil servants and implementing organizations. Unfortunately, it is often restrained by the lack of resources and the realization of international commitments on the central level, which results in gender equality being considered as a politically non-central issue.

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KARAT Coalition

Since 1997, KARAT has been running a network of women's NGOs from Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) aimed to ensure gender equality through monitoring the implementation of international agreements and policies. It advocates women's human rights, economic social justice and gender-focused development cooperation with a strong focus on the perspective from CEE and CIS. KARAT has built up a strong network over the past decade and is currently composed of approximately 60 members.

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One World Action (OWA)

OWA was a civil society organization established in 1989 to work alongside rural and urban women's organizations and networks across Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Through capacity-building, networking and advocacy, it worked on issues such as women's rights, participatory governance and social exclusion. It was advocating and campaigning in the UK and Europe to challenge international policies that make and keep people poor. OWA has ceased operations and it closed its office in September 2011.

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