



One World Action (OWA)

OWA is a civil society organisation established in 1989 to work alongside rural and urban women's organisations and networks across Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. We see the root causes of poverty as the lack of power and therefore we work with the poorest and most excluded people so that they gain voice, power and opportunity to transform their own lives. Through capacity-building, networking and advocacy, we work on issues such as women's rights, participatory governance and social exclusion. We advocate and campaign in the UK and Europe to challenge international policies that make and keep people poor.

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 for 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 by approximately 60 members, comprising 50 organisations.

CONNECT!

**EAST/SOUTH/WEST WOMEN
FOR DEVELOPMENT**

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LINKING WOMEN FOR EU-WIDE GENDER SENSITIVE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Gender equality for development justice

Over the past 30 years women's rights and gender activists have mobilised to position gender equality as an intrinsic part of the development agenda. In the European Union, these efforts have resulted in strong commitments with the adoption of women's rights and gender equality as one of the five key principles of the European Consensus on Development. Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia joined the European Union in 2004, signing up to the same commitments on gender and development, as did Bulgaria and Romania in 2007.

Despite progressive policy agendas, across Europe the policy-practice divide remains wide especially in the area of gender and women's rights due to a lack of political will, reduced capacity on gender equality, resources allocation and lack of policy coherence. In New Member States (NMS), these challenges are compounded by limited experience and expertise. The Connect! project seeks to be a catalyst in trying to close the gap between policy and practice at the European Union level.

What is the Connect! East/South/West Women for Development Project?

Connect! is a pioneering initiative aimed at supporting women's organisations and NGOs in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Slovakia to influence and hold their government to account by demanding full implementation of EU policy on gender equality and women's empowerment in their development assistance programmes.

The project aims to build linkages between women's organisations (and long-term partners of One World Action) in Southern Africa and NGOs in NMS. It is an opportunity to discover commonalities in experiences and learn from differences, all of which will contribute to a deeper understanding of the various challenges and successes in women's rights struggles. More broadly, it encourages the development and consolidation of new South/East/West perspectives on women's rights, gender equality and development.



Coalition of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (COWLHA), Malawi 2008 (Photo: Tara Brace-John)

The Connect! project is a three-year project partly funded by the European Commission. One World Action from the UK and KARAT Coalition, a network from Central and Eastern Europe with its Secretariat based in Poland, are jointly coordinating the Connect! East/South/West Women for development project. We are working closely with KARAT's member organisations:

- National Association of Human Resources Specialists (AUR), Romania
- Gender, Education, Research and Technologies (GERT), Bulgaria
- Gender Studies and the Association for Equal Opportunities, Czech Republic
- Slovak Centre for Communication and Development (SCCD), Slovakia

Aims of the project

The project seeks to establish a strong EU-wide constituency for gender-sensitive and responsive development cooperation. More specifically the project seeks:

- To build the capacity of women's organisations and non-governmental development organisation (NGDOs) in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria,

Slovakia and Czech Republic to engage with their policy-makers on the issue of women's rights and development and the implementation of relevant EU legal and policy commitments.

- To strengthen governance and accountability processes between government and women's organisations and NGOs at the country level.
- To build the capacity of NMS women's organisations and NGDOs to engage with broader public opinion on gender equality, women's rights and development.
- To challenge stereotypes and build bridges between women's organisations and NGOs working on gender equality.
- To assist women's organisations and NGOs to form closer links with and learn from Southern African women's organisations.
- To ensure that the European voices include the views of women from the NMS and ultimately to strengthen and deepen the overall European campaign for gender equality and women's rights to development.



Community group, Women for Change, Zambia 2008 (Photo: Tara Brace-John)

Project activities

1. National and regional dialogues, sharing of experience and capacity building

The project will create spaces and opportunities for exchange and sharing between women from Southern Africa and Eastern Europe. The expertise of women from the South will deeply inform the dialogue in NMS and will form the core of the South/East/West learning experience.

- A regional dialogue in Warsaw will take place in the first year of the project and serve as a means for disseminating information, linking with regional initiatives, planning advocacy activities and mobilisation activities.
- Four national dialogues will be held in year two and three in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania and will be an opportunity for capacity-building, advocacy activities and networking. These dialogues will also raise awareness about the importance of gender equality and women's rights in development cooperation.

“The EU recognises gender equality as a right and it is both a development goal in itself and a cornerstone of poverty eradication. The EU should ensure that its policy commitment to gender equality is systematically put into practice and demonstrate political will and leadership by consistently championing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.”

(CONCORD, 2009)

- Advocacy meetings will be arranged simultaneously for Southern African women to meet and interact directly with policy-makers in NMS.

2. Analysis and resource development

The Connect! project will develop documentation for awareness-raising and capacity-building in the form of policy and media briefings and web resources. Baseline information will be collated in order to highlight the gap that exists between policy commitments and implementation in NMS including two case studies on NMS and development policy and programmes. Media briefings will also be created, linking different development issues and gender equality.

3. Media and public events

Public events and activities to raise media attention will serve to reach a wider audience as well as to engage with policy-makers. These activities will be carried out in conjunction with the regional and national dialogues.