



# Action Brief:

## Development cooperation and gender equality in the New Member States of the European Union

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Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Slovakia belong to the group of countries (EU-12) that joined the European Union (EU) in 2004 and 2007<sup>1</sup>. By signing the Accession Treaties, these countries made a legal and political commitment to adjust their national legislation and harmonise their foreign policies in accordance with the standards of the EU. This includes specific legal and political commitments on international development cooperation, including an obligation to increase both the quantity and quality of aid.

The EU-12 countries, also referred to as New Member States (NMS), are in an interesting position. As former aid recipients themselves, they are familiar with Official Development Assistance (ODA) and have prior experience of foreign aid management. However, as new EU donors, they face the challenges of building up their own systems for effective development planning, coordination and delivery of aid.

In today's context, the need for all EU countries to deliver on their commitments to aid is more urgent than ever. We live in a world where poverty and inequalities are widespread and deepening. Almost 40 per cent of the world's population live on less than two dollars a day, with women and girls most severely affected<sup>2</sup>. The setting of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>3</sup> a decade ago represented a major step forwards in the struggle to eradicate extreme poverty and inequality, yet with only five years to go to the 2015 deadline, progress is badly off track. Recent multiple global crises have worsened the situation: the World Bank estimates that developing countries

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- <sup>1</sup> The EU-12 consists of Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Hungary, which joined 2004. Bulgaria and Romania joined in 2007.
  - <sup>2</sup> Pereira, J. & J. Burnley (2009) Lighten the load. In a time of crisis, European aid has never been more important, AidWatch CONCORD (available online)
  - <sup>3</sup> The MDGs were agreed at the 2000 UN Millennium Summit where the poverty focus was captured by governments and donors into eight key goals to halve poverty by 2015, and funding was to focus on achieving these goals. Additional funding to meet these goals was agreed in 2002 at the UN Monterrey Financing for Development conference. The poorest countries, especially in Africa, were prioritised for much of this funding (GADN, 2008).

now face a financing gap of US\$270-US\$700 billion as a result of the financial crisis<sup>4</sup>. Women are often hardest hit by crises due to pre-existing inequalities, which mean they have fewer assets – such as education and resources – to cushion them from financial and environmental shocks.

Yet in spite of this bleak picture, there are also opportunities. It is still early days for NMS – they are in the process of shaping their development priorities and building their country systems for ODA delivery. This presents a huge opportunity for civil society to engage in these processes, to hold governments to account for their aid commitments, and to push for gender equality to be a development priority.

This brief explores development cooperation in five NMS: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. It highlights the main challenges and the progress made, and identifies opportunities for ensuring the principle of gender equality is at the heart of the international development agenda of NMS<sup>5</sup>.

## 1 Setting the Scene: Aid in NMS, pre and post 1989

Contrary to what is often assumed, NMS are not new to development cooperation. As part of the communist bloc, they were important players in the delivery of aid between 1960 and 1980, when aid was framed as a political and economic tool to promote communism across the globe. During the Cold War period, for example, former Czechoslovakia was one of the largest donors to the Soviet Block, channelling between 0.7 per cent and 0.9 per cent of its Gross National Income (GNI)<sup>6</sup> in aid<sup>7</sup>. Romania similarly provided financial support to no less than 39 African countries, 32 in Latin America and 16 in Asia<sup>8</sup>.

Following the end of the Cold War, during two decades of transition from centrally-planned socialist economies to market driven ones<sup>9</sup>, NMS became recipients rather than providers of aid, relying to a large extent on financial support from the EU for their domestic development. Although variations exist across NMS, the experience they gained as both aid recipients and donors undeniably informs their political priorities and approach to development today.

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4 Ibid

5 For the purpose of this brief, we will use NMS to refer to the five states discussed in the document. EU-12 will be used to refer to states who joined in 2004 and 2007.

6 The Gross National Income measures the wealth of a country, through domestic economic activities and its income received from other country.

7 Simunkova, B. (2009), Gender Questions in Development Cooperation: Emerging Issues in the Czech Republic's Bilateral Programmes, Research Paper, International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague (available online).

8 Oprea, M & R.Novac (2009), It's Our Turn to Help! Development Cooperation in Romania, FOND, Bucharest (available online).

9 This transition is characterised by economic liberalisation, including prices being set by market forces rather than the state, the removal of trade barriers, privatisation of government-owned enterprises and resources, and the creation of a financial sector to facilitate the movement of private capital.

## 2 Today's context: a new global aid architecture

Over the past decade, the mechanisms and processes through which aid is distributed have undergone major changes, with the introduction of new more 'efficient' and 'effective' ways of delivering and managing aid – collectively termed 'new aid modalities' (NAMs)<sup>10</sup>. These NAMs include Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which are drafted by partner governments recipients of aid and outline a country's main strategies to address poverty; Basket Funds, where several donors jointly fund a programme, sector or budget; and Direct Budget Support, where aid is channelled directly to partner government budgets.

The NAMs are underpinned by a set of principles enshrined in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness – a framework for international cooperation adopted by members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2005. The Paris Declaration establishes global, time-bound commitments for donor and partner countries to support more effective aid in a context of significant increases in ODA<sup>11</sup>. The idea is to reform the delivery and management of aid in order to improve its effectiveness and achieve development results<sup>12</sup>. The Paris Declaration has five key principles, outlined in the box below. In Accra, Ghana, in September 2008, donors and partner governments reviewed progress on the implementation of the Paris Declaration and agreed a new Accra 'agenda for action'.

### What are the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness?<sup>13</sup>

*The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness outlines five principles that should shape aid delivery:*

**OWNERSHIP:** Developing countries will exercise leadership over their development policies and strategies, and will coordinate development actions;

**ALIGNMENT:** Donor countries will base their overall support on recipient countries' national development strategies, institutions, and procedures;

**HARMONISATION:** Donor countries will work so that their actions are more harmonised, transparent, and collectively effective;

**MANAGING FOR RESULTS:** All countries will manage resources and improve decision-making for results; and,

**MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY:** Donor and developing countries pledge that they will be mutually accountable for development results.

<sup>10</sup> Esplen, E. & Brody, A. (2010) Gender review of the external environment for development: impacts on poverty reduction and implications for Irish Aid policy on aid and gender equality, BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton

<sup>11</sup> OECD-DAC (2008) Making the linkages: Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, Issue Brief 1 (available online)

<sup>12</sup> ibid

<sup>13</sup> This box was taken directly from AWID (2008) Primer 1: An Overview of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the new Aid Modalities on aid effectiveness and women's rights (available online)

### 3 Development Cooperation in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Slovakia

In joining the EU, all NMS signed the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action, and agreed to achieve ODA targets of 0.17 per cent GNI by 2010 and 0.33 per cent by 2015<sup>14</sup>, and improve the quality (or impact) of their aid. They also became legally and politically bound by commitments to provide aid rooted in International Human Rights Treaties and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). But how well are NMS doing in meeting these commitments?

#### A) Aid quantity, quality and disbursement

Targets for 2010 are unlikely to be met. For the five NMS discussed in this brief, reported ODA spending in 2009 varied between GNI 0.04 per cent in the case of Bulgaria to 0.12 per cent in the Czech Republic. These figures however overstate progress, if any, because they are inflated with debt cancellation, assistance to refugee, students' scholarships, etc. While spending in these areas can be counted as ODA, reporting them to a large extent, overshadows the poverty reduction goal of development assistance.

**Chart 1. ODA volumes in 2009<sup>15</sup>**

Bulgaria	0,04%	
Czech Republic	0,12%	
Poland	0,08%	
Romania	0,06%	
Slovakia	0,08%	
<b>Target 2010</b>	<b>0,17%</b>	

Combined with these low ODA volumes in NMS is a trend of channelling aid in support of political interests and regional stability over and above poverty reduction and meeting the MDGs. This is strongly reflected in the disbursement of ODA, which focuses on middle-income countries where NMS have a comparative advantage but do not necessarily address poverty or the MDGs, but rather support to the transition from centrally planned to market-driven economies. Only a minimal

<sup>14</sup> CEC (2005) Council Conclusions: Accelerating progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, Brussels (available online).

<sup>15</sup> Pereira, J. & A. Bozzini (2010), Penalty against poverty. More and Better EU aid can score Millennium Development Goals, AidWatch CONCORD (available online)

amount is channelled to the least developed countries and low income countries. For example, Poland has increased financial support to its neighbours, such as Belarus and Ukraine (see Chart 2). Although Tanzania was one of Polish Aid's priority countries in 2008, it received 50 times less funding than Belarus<sup>16</sup>. Weak political will for development in Poland has been compounded by the current economic crisis. Project aid (the aid channelled directly to development projects on the ground often via non-governmental organisations) to Africa was cut by almost half, while allocations to Ukraine and Belarus decreased only very slightly<sup>17</sup>. Similar trends can be observed in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, where aid is being channelled to Serbia, and in Romania, where Moldova is the primary recipient of ODA<sup>18</sup>. While these countries need ODA to foster their own development, the primary focus on the neighbourhood policy and eastern partnership is misleading, as these policies mostly focus on European integration rather than poverty reduction.

**Chart 2: Recipients of Polish bilateral ODA in 2009<sup>19</sup>**

Sub-Saharan African countries combined (e.g. Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi)	3,05	
Afghanistan	6,34	
Angola	7,33	
Ukraine	9,12	
Georgia	11,19	
Belarus	15,50	
China	31,16	

A further criticism relates to the fact that the largest chunk of NMS' development assistance is channelled through the intermediary of international institutions such as the EU<sup>20</sup>, United Nations, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) ('multilateral aid'<sup>21</sup>), rather than being given directly from one country to another ('bilateral aid') therefore meaning less development assistance being disbursed for poverty reduction, particularly to African countries. In 2009, for example, Bulgaria disbursed almost no bilateral aid. Poland plans to increase ODA to Sub-Saharan Africa in

<sup>16</sup> DAC Questionnaire On Aid Flows From Non-DAC Donors, 2009 edition

<sup>17</sup> Wojtalik, M. (2010) Polish government cuts aid to Africa, Policy analysis, Institute of Global Responsibility, Warsaw (available online)

<sup>18</sup> Pereira, J. & A. Bozzini (2010), Penalty against poverty. More and Better EU aid can score Millennium Development Goals, AidWatch CONCORD (available online)

<sup>19</sup> DAC questionnaire on Aid flows from non-DAC donors 2009.

<sup>20</sup> The five NMS discussed in this document have not yet contributed to the European Development Fund (EDF), but did contribute to the financing for Development Cooperation Instrument. The first contribution to the EDF is planned for 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Multilateral aid is where an organisation like the EU or World Bank pools and distributes donations from several countries' governments



2011 through the European Development Fund, rather than scaling up its bilateral aid<sup>22</sup>. As stated by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA),<sup>23</sup> there will be no bilateral ODA increase for Sub-Saharan African countries in the years ahead. Development cooperation in these NMS will therefore effectively be reduced to an annual pay cheque to the EU and other multilateral organisations.

Of the bilateral aid which is given, much is allocated by ministries whose remit is not primarily concerned with reducing poverty. In each of the five NMS, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) chairs development cooperation programming and implementation, while the Ministry of Finance makes decisions about the budget. Despite its leading role, the MFA in the five NMS approximately coordinates only a mere 30 per cent of total bilateral aid. The remaining 70 per cent is used by other Ministries, such as the Ministries of Agriculture or Education, which report their actions as ODA. In 2008, for example, the Czech Ministries of Industry and Trade, Environment, and Agriculture were allocated 78 per cent of the bilateral development cooperation budget. The majority of projects that were implemented were placed in the hands of the private sector (44 per cent), with state and associated organisations receiving 26 per cent of allocations and Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs) only 22 per cent<sup>24</sup>. The small share of the overall aid budget controlled by the MFA undermines the leadership and coordination role the Ministry is supposed to play, and undermines the principle that development assistance must first and foremost be used for poverty reduction.

## B) Legislative and Institutional Changes

One of the cornerstones for effective aid is an effective legislative and policy framework governing when development or humanitarian assistance can be given, in what forms, and on what terms. Legislation is especially important in terms of enshrining in law the principle that aid must contribute to the central goal of poverty reduction. This helps ensure that aid is not tied to commercial or political interests or diverted for other purposes. Legal acts can also mandate that the Development Cooperation Agency must report regularly on how much money has been spent on aid, how effective it has been in reducing poverty, and how much has been channelled to poor countries.

Such legislation is not yet fully established in NMS. To date, of the five NMS focused on in this brief, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are the only two countries that have passed a legal act on development cooperation. The Slovak Act on development assistance, which entered into force on 1 February 2008<sup>25</sup>, establishes basic goals of Slovak ODA (with a primary focus on reducing poverty and hunger in developing countries) and defines the competencies of the relevant ministries, governmental bodies and the newly established Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation (SAIDC). The Czech Republic recently adopted a similar act on development cooperation

<sup>22</sup> Data retrieved from the Questionnaire from Monterrey to Doha and Beyond – EU Progress on financing for development and MDGs. According to the authors of the independent Polish Aid Watch Report this is too little to deliver the commitments Poland has subscribed itself to in European Consensus on Development (2005). The Questionnaire was filled by Polish MFA and sent to the European Commission in February 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Statement during the conference devoted to Poland's place in the international system of development cooperation that followed up presentation of a report by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. 17th May 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Simunkova, B. (2009), Gender Questions in Development Cooperation: Emerging Issues in the Czech Republic's Bilateral Programmes, Research Paper, International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague (available online).

<sup>25</sup> National Council of the Slovak Republic (2007) Legal act on development cooperation and humanitarian aid (available online)

and humanitarian aid, which entered into force in June 2010. Czech development cooperation has been going through an institutional restructure with the aim that, from 2011 when the process is expected to be completed, most bilateral aid will be implemented solely by the MFA rather than by several different ministries. The restructure has also led to the establishment of the Czech Development Agency (CDA) and the Czech Council for Development Cooperation (CCDC), an inter-ministerial advisory body designed to ensure better coordination of Czech ODA. In Poland, the process of developing a legal framework has recently been accelerated and it is hoped that a draft law on development cooperation will be approved in September 2010. Such processes have not yet begun in Romania and Bulgaria.

In addition to legislation, development cooperation agencies need an overarching framework for their work, which fully reflects key international commitments and provides guidance in main areas of operation<sup>26</sup> in the medium and long term. In recent years, some NMS have started to develop such frameworks, in consultation with NGOs and the wider public. However, the practice of strategic planning is uneven across the five NMS. Slovakia, for instance, has a development cooperation medium-term strategy (2009-2013), as well as annual programming strategies. But country strategy papers, which set out how a development cooperation agency intends to contribute to poverty reduction and to achieving the MDGs in particular countries are only produced for a few countries. Bulgaria has a draft development cooperation concept paper which has yet to be approved by the Council of Ministers, but subsequent strategies are still to be developed. None of the five NMS has an evaluation system in place - evaluation is often confused with monitoring and is limited to reporting on funded initiatives without assessing impact, as it is the case in Poland.

To ensure democratic ownership of the development agenda and strong accountability for development results, all strategic documents should be developed in consultation with civil society representatives at the national level, as well as in partner countries. While the degree and quality of dialogue between decision-makers and national civil society organisations in NMS varies, consultations with governments and civil society in priority partner countries is lacking. This limits partner countries' ownership of the development agenda, undermining a crucial principle of the Paris Declaration. Mutual accountability for development results between donors and partners – another key principle of the Paris Declaration – is also weakened because civil societies are unable to fulfil their “watchdog” role.

### Key components of a strong strategic framework for development cooperation and gender equality

- **A well defined legislative framework** on international development cooperation
- **Clearly defined overarching strategic aims and objectives**
- **Medium-term (3-5 years) strategic plans:** outlining principles and priorities of development cooperation in the medium-term
- **Country Strategy Papers (CSPs)** (sometimes also referred to as Country Assistance Plans or Country Plans): Developed in consultation with partners and local actors, coun-

try plans set out how a development cooperation agency intends to contribute to poverty reduction and to achieving the MDGs in a particular country. They start out from an analysis of a country's development needs, taking into account the country's own strategy and plans to reduce poverty. The plans generally last between three and five years, and set particular themes, activity plans and strategies, as well as how much aid will be given, how it will be spent and what impact is expected. Sometimes regional plans are also created.

- **Annual operational plan:** Setting specific objectives and activities for the year in accordance with the medium-term strategy
- **Evaluation and monitoring reporting and systems:** Very much part of the above-mentioned documents, a monitoring and evaluation system and regular reporting are critical in assessing how and whether results are being achieved, and learning lessons for the future.
- **Policy or strategy on gender equality and women's empowerment and other cross cutting issues in development cooperation** and an action plan outlining how the policy will be implemented

## 4 Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Development Cooperation

### A) Why must gender equality and women's rights be central to development cooperation?

*"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, as well as being instrumental in achieving all the MDGs"*  
European Consensus on Development 2005

Women's and men's experiences are framed by social expectations which assign them different and unequal roles, responsibilities and entitlements on the basis of their gender. As a result, women and men have unequal access to and control over resources, including money, education, land and property, and decision-making and political power. These inequalities must be taken into account and redressed through policy-making and budgetary processes at all levels. This is key to ensuring that policies and public spending meet the different needs and priorities of women and men, and transform rather than reproduce gender biases and inequalities.

As a result of these gendered constraints, women and girls are often most severely affected by poverty. For example, girls are disadvantaged in respect of education and training, reducing their em-

ployment prospects, with the result that women are often concentrated at the informal end of the labour market where working conditions are least secure and work is poorly paid. Women and girls are also expected to take on primary responsibility for domestic and care work which cuts heavily into economic activity, making it difficult for them to continue with or take up paid work, or restricting them to low-paid and often part-time jobs<sup>27</sup>. Perhaps most importantly, women lack one of the most important tools in transforming their lives for the better – power.

Gender equality and women's rights must therefore be central to development cooperation because development is about reducing poverty and the majority of the poorest people in the world are women – a result of pervasive gender inequality. Releasing the potential of all women and girls is also key to development effectiveness, poverty reduction and economic growth. Poverty will simply not come to an end until women have equal rights with men (see the box below). Most importantly, women's rights must be at the heart of development work because achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is a basic moral imperative and a human right - the denial of human rights and opportunities purely because of a person's gender is simply unjust.

#### WHY GENDER EQUALITY IS ESSENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS?<sup>28</sup>

- In some African countries, children of mothers who have spent five years in primary education are 40 per cent more likely to live beyond the age of five.
- In India, if the ratio of female to male workers were increased by 10 per cent, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would rise by 8 per cent.
- In sub-Saharan Africa it has been calculated that agricultural productivity could increase by up to 20 per cent if women's access to resources such as land, seed and fertiliser were equal that of men.
- Women reinvest 90 per cent of their income in their families and communities, compared to men who reinvest only 30 per cent to 40 per cent of their income.

## B) What international legal and policy frameworks exist for advancing gender equality and women's rights?

Strong international legal and policy commitments exist to advance gender equality and combat gender-based discrimination. Most significant is the Convention on Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), described as an international "bill of rights for women", which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979. At its 30th anniversary in 2009, CEDAW had been ratified by over 90 per cent of the United Nations – 186 countries. These countries are legally bound to put its provisions into practice.

<sup>27</sup> Espen, E. (2009) Cutting Edge Pack: Gender and Care, BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton

<sup>28</sup> OECD-DAC Guiding Principles on Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (available online)



Another landmark in policy terms is the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), which was borne out of the Fourth World UN Conference on Women in 1995. This established a global policy framework to advance gender equality. More recent was the setting of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000<sup>29</sup>, which received a mixed response from gender equality advocates. MDG3 focuses on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, signalling a strong recognition by UN Member States of the central importance of gender equality to human development. Yet progress to date has been uneven and slow. There has also been criticism of the MDG framework itself, which focuses overwhelmingly on girls' enrolment in education and excludes other crucial facets of gender inequality, such as violence against women.

At the European level, the adoption of the European Consensus on Development (2005) recognises gender equality as a goal in its own right and as one of the five common principles of EU development cooperation. The Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation (2007), and the subsequent Council Conclusions,<sup>30</sup> provide a strong framework for advancing gender equality. More recently, the EU Gender Plan of Action, adopted in 2010, constitutes the first steps towards a coordinated European approach to promoting gender equality. In light of these strong commitments at both the international and European levels, all EU members are obligated to promote women's empowerment and gender equality as a central component of their development cooperation.

### **C) What strategies can be used to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in NMS development cooperation?**

Before 1989, recognition of gender inequality was largely absent in the public and political discourse in NMS. Gender as a category of analysis was not commonly used and feminism was perceived as a western ideology with no relevance to socialist states. Although the transition process and accession to the EU brought gender inequalities within NMS into the public arena, it did not bring about substantive changes in women's position relative to men – in many respects, gender inequalities were exacerbated with the economic transition to a free market economy. Limited attention to gender equality nationally, combined with weak links between government units responsible for gender equality at the national level and development cooperation departments in the MFA, is reflected in NMS foreign and aid policies which are largely gender blind.

A 'twin-track' approach is most commonly used by development agencies to ensure that issues of gender equality and women's rights are integrated across all areas of development work. This approach involves a combination of targeted initiatives specifically designed to promote gender equality, such as programmes to increase women's awareness of their human rights, as well as the integration or "mainstreaming" of gender equality into all development initiatives.

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for achieving the goal of gender equality, defined as "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action (in all political, economic, social spheres), so that both women and men can benefit equally and inequalities are

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29 All are commitments led by United Nations

30 Documents are available online



not reproduced and perpetuated<sup>31</sup>. This means ensuring a gender perspective is central to policy development, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all programmes and projects.

There continues to be much debate about whether the strategy of gender mainstreaming has succeeded or failed. One of the dangers is that when gender concerns are left to the mainstream, rather than being the responsibility of specific gender staff or units, they are easily forgotten. Another challenge is ensuring that commitments to gender mainstreaming at the policy level don't 'evaporate' at the level of implementation. A clear lesson emerging from evaluations of gender mainstreaming is that mainstreaming is only effective when used in combination with targeted initiatives to specifically address the needs and priorities of women and girls (the "twin track" approach).

In NMS, gender equality and women's empowerment receive little attention in the strategic frameworks for development cooperation. Where they are mentioned, they are generally treated as a separate policy area rather than being truly mainstreamed throughout development policy, programming and implementation. The Czech Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) acknowledge gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, but a more in depth study of eight CSPs revealed that only Vietnam's paper had gender as a priority, and that it was mainstreamed into one sub-sector only (the social sector). Mainstreaming through other sectors was not proposed<sup>32</sup>. In Slovakia, gender equality is recognised as a cross-cutting issue in the Country Strategy Paper for Afghanistan (2011-2013), and the government is using ODA money to fund a number of projects targeting women's empowerment. Gender equality is a requirement in the call for funding proposals in Slovakia, Poland, and Czech Republic – the guidelines recommend that all implementing organisations recognise men's and women's different interests and guarantee their equal access to project results. In practice, however, the extent to which these guidelines are seriously translated into action is down to the individual NGO – the recommendations are neither enforced nor monitored. Unsurprisingly, results are uneven and patchy: of the five NMS analysed in this brief, ODA-supported projects range from initiatives which clearly address gender inequalities and contribute to women's empowerment, to initiatives which are entirely 'gender blind' – i.e. they do not take gender into consideration, and sometimes even reinforce existing inequalities.

Yet it is still early days – NMS are only at the beginning of their way to responsible, equitable and effective ODA delivery. Strengthening the participation of women's organisations and the development of gender machineries can increase attention to women's rights and gender equality in NMS, both in internal policies and external affairs.

31 ECOSOC (1997), *Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system*

32 The CSPs reviewed are Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Moldova, Mongolia, Vietnam, Yemen and Zambia. For more information: Simunkova, B. (2009), *Gender Questions in Development Cooperation: Emerging Issues in the Czech Republic's Bilateral Programmes*, Research Paper, International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague

## 5 Key challenges and ways forward

### A) Strengthening institutional capacity

Progress in improving the quality and quantity of aid cannot be achieved without a development framework to set out strategic aims and objectives and to clearly tie development assistance to the central goal of poverty reduction.

#### **Recommendations:**

##### **Decision-makers in NMS should**

- Allocate financial and human resources to the development of legal, institutional and policy frameworks for ODA planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- Strengthen the coordination role of MFAs to ensure coherence across the various ministries providing development assistance
- Set up formal and meaningful spaces for consultation with CSOs, including active engagement with women's organisations
- Collaborate with more experienced organisations (e.g. UNDP, UNIFEM, DFID) to strengthen capacities and develop synergies with other EU and multilateral donors.

##### **Civil Society Organisations in NMS should**

- Lobby their governments to develop an effective institutional, legislative and policy framework
- Monitor progress and highlight shortcomings
- Advocate for the establishment of formal and meaningful spaces for consultation with policy-makers.

### B) Pursuing poverty reduction as the focus of development cooperation

Many NMS have fallen into a pattern of sidelining the primary objective of poverty alleviation in favour of more politically and economically motivated aid allocations designed to support democracy in the neighboring countries and promote security.

#### **Recommendations**

##### **Decision-makers in NMS should**

- Focus on poverty reduction as the ultimate objective of development cooperation, in accordance with legal and policy commitments

- Support the Development Cooperation Department within the MFA to strengthen the development focus of other Ministries disbursing ODA
- Allocate the necessary resources to meet the commitment to reaching 0.17 per cent GNI as ODA by 2010, and 0.33 per cent GNI by 2015 and ensure quality (impact) of ODA
- Work more closely with southern partners to increase their ownership of development cooperation.

#### **Civil Society Organisations in NMS should**

- Lobby policy-makers to focus development assistance on reducing poverty, including by allocating more resources for poverty reduction as per EU commitments, and monitor aid flows to ensure this focus is being upheld in practice
- Build support for development cooperation, including through engaging with MPs, MEPs, the media and the general public to raise awareness of the importance of development cooperation, particularly the importance of women's rights as a key foreign policy priority.

## **C) Prioritising gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation**

Success in reducing poverty and achieving the MDGs is only possible if gender equality and women's rights are at the centre of the development agenda. Commitments embodied in the European Consensus on Development (2005) and the EC Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in development cooperation (2007) must be translated into practice. This means introducing mechanisms to support gender-sensitive development planning, earmarking budget lines for gender equality and women's empowerment, and evaluating the gender-disaggregated impact of development programmes and projects, including through the mandatory incorporation of gender-sensitive indicators into all monitoring systems. This in turn will depend on strong political will from decision-makers and determined advocacy by civil society.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Decision-makers in NMS should**

- Fully implement EU legal and policy commitments on gender equality and development cooperation, backed up by robust resources
- Develop a gender policy and action plan to ensure integration of gender equality and women's empowerment as a cross-cutting issue and a goal in its own right in all development cooperation policies and practices
- Build capacity on gender equality among all stakeholders engaged in ODA delivery.

#### **Civil Society Organisations in NMS should**

- Strengthen linkages between NGOs platforms and women's organisations to ensure that their experiences at national level inform development cooperation

- Carry out awareness raising on gender equality and women's rights for government officials and other stakeholders
- Lobby the MFA to take gender equality and women's empowerment on board as an integral component in policy formulation processes and programming cycles
- Engage with CSOs and women's organisations from the South and North to learn from their experiences of advocating for a gender-sensitive agenda in development cooperation policy and practice. This is also important to ensure that CSOs in NMS are reflecting the needs and priorities of Southern women's organisations in their advocacy work.

## D) Fostering civil society engagement

CSOs in NMS have been active in holding their governments accountable for the development commitments their country adhered to in joining the EU. These organisations are an integral part of the European development cooperation agenda and their voices and expertise must be heard and acted upon. This potential, however, will not be realised if their contribution remains undervalued by decision-makers and if possibilities to grow, expand and build bridges with other organisations are undermined due to inadequate funding of CSO work.

### Recommendations

#### Decision-makers in NMS should

- Recognise the expertise of civil society, including women's organisations, and the important role that CSOs and national NGOs platforms can play throughout the development cooperation process to increase accountability for gender equality
- Create formal and inclusive spaces for consultation with civil society, paying particular attention to ensuring the representation of women's organisations
- Engage with civil society in partner countries, including women's organisations
- Provide strong funding for civil society, including core funding. In light of falling funding to women's organisations globally, especially in the face of the shift to the new aid modalities, funding for women's organisations must be a priority.

#### Civil Society Organisation's in NMS should

- Consolidate national platforms and increase collaboration with women's organisations and other civil society organisations with a women's rights focus
- Lobby the government for inclusive consultation processes – including engagement with CSOs in partner countries
- Expand and build bridges with other organisations working on development, gender equality and women's rights as well as other issues such as democratic participation, environmental sustainability, etc. in order to respond to the challenges and requirements of effective international cooperation.



## Acronyms

BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action (1995)
CCDC	Czech Council for Development Cooperation
CDA	Czech Development Agency
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)
CSPs	Country Strategy Papers
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals (2000)
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NAMs	new aid modalities
NGDOs	Non-Governmental Development Organisations
NMS	New Member States
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRSPs	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers



### **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.

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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 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.

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