



Owning Development Promoting Gender Equality in New Aid Modalities and Partnerships

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**Gender Equality and Development Cooperation:
Country Ownership and Donor Partnership**
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During many of my visits to developing countries I meet wonderful women of all ages and in all categories of society but I am still shocked by what is happening to many. The atmosphere of sheer neglect rooted in gender inequality and poverty adds up to a death sentence for countless millions of women in the developing world. We have the covenant in place and we have seen progress in recent years but it remains difficult to convince colleagues and stakeholders of the urgency and the opportunity to stop the indifference and inaction. The more recent changes in development paradigms and aid modalities require a fresh look into the strategies used to move from good intentions to keeping the promises.

1) The objective of the conference organised in cooperation with UNIFEM and Europe External Policy Advisors (EEPA)

Since gender inequality is so much more extreme in many of the countries that the EC/EU support with development programmes, the Commission has partnered with the two organisations to realise this conference. The objective is to widely consult on how to develop the strategy to embed gender equality and women's empowerment in our new ways of thinking and working in development and development cooperation and to develop concrete strategies for the EC/EU to accelerate, improve and adapt our strategy for gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation.

2) Gender equality in development cooperation is critical in its own right and it is an essential element to reduce poverty, to foster development and to advance human rights:

► **Poverty Reduction** – A disproportionate majority (around 70 per cent) of the world's poor are women who, in some instances, lack not only access to important economic and social resources and opportunities, but also have their rights as individuals denied to them. Gender equality is an essential condition of eradicating poverty.

► **Development** – A lot of productive work in the developing world is done by women. The contributions that women make to their families' livelihood should be further supported with unequivocal access to natural resources (such as water), education, and technical expertise. Investments in improving the situation of women translate into higher levels of productivity, and lower levels of infant and female mortality, food insecurity and poverty. The salience of these connections highlights the need for an adequate focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women if the MDG's are to be achievable objectives.

► Rights – The advancement of equality between men and women is a condition to advance democracy and human rights. It is the only way to build a sustainable, just and developed society (Beijing). Half of the population in several of the poorest regions in the world cannot participate in decision making and have their civic and human rights denied despite the international consensus build up over the last few decades.

3) A specific example: HIV magnifies the causes and consequences of Gender Inequality

Only recently did the global community recognise that the HIV /AIDS epidemic has a face of a young African and married women. In sub-Saharan Africa, sixty percent of HIV positive adults are women.

This situation is created by a serious power imbalance between the genders. The imbalance explains why women get HIV/AIDS even if they only have one partner, their husband. The sexual promiscuity of men, and the inability of women to negotiate when, with whom and under what circumstances she will engage in sexual relations is a direct result of such power imbalances and has serious implications for levels of HIV infection amongst men and women. The power imbalance also explains why women can not control most of the available prevention methods such as condoms. Why they also receive less information or education to protect themselves and their families.

Over the years women have been in the minority designing policy and programmes worldwide but especially in Africa. Research has only slowly focussed at women populations of methods. In many countries women cannot inherit property, and as a widow, women receive less support when their husbands die.

Not only in Africa: Studies in India have shown one of the greatest risk factors for HIV infection in women is being the monogamous wife of an unfaithful husband. In one study, 25 per cent of the 4,000 women were infected with a sexually transmitted disease and 14 per cent were HIV positive.

4) The International and EU Policy Framework has been put into place in the last thirty years

If the UN and EU covenants and instruments that have been developed over the last decade were concretely followed, this would be a different world.

Let us recall some of the milestone international commitments signed by most of the countries worldwide and all of the EU countries more specifically.

► Beginning with CEDAW in 1976: the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW 1979) contains explicit clauses affirming non discrimination on the basis of sex and declare equality between women and men.

► The Cairo agenda in 1994 (United Nations International Conference on Population and Development): The signatories identified a Platform for Action on population and development and agreed for the *first time on a comprehensive approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights of people.*

► In Copenhagen in 1995 at the World Summit for Social Development: Gender equality was recognised as an *essential condition for achieving poverty eradication.*

► In Beijing in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women: The international community *endorsed gender mainstreaming* as a key institutional response and highlighted the twin objectives of promoting gender equality and empowering of women in their own right.

► And most recently in 2000, the international community signed on to the *Millenium Declaration, and the 8 Millenium Development Goals*: The third Millennium Development Goal specifically aims to promote gender equality and empower women. For the measurement of this Goal a specific target to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later then 2015 was selected. The 8th objective on partnership also includes gender equality even if not always very visibly.

Some of us wonder if there were no better indices available than those agreed on in the Millennium Summit for the monitoring of gender equality and women's empowerment as defined in all the conventions, in terms of every aspect of civil, economic, social, reproductive and political life.

Recently some of the omissions have been corrected through the work of the Millennium Task Force and often with the support of civil society, many developing countries and also Europe.

However in many people's opinion, women's rights and gender equality is the poor sister on the block of the millennium goals and poverty reduction strategies of many countries and donors. There is also no acceptable explanation for the fact that the goal for sexual and reproductive health and rights is completely missing from the mix of MDG's from the onset yet maternal mortality, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, violence against women and female genital mutilation constitute some of the great issues of our time. The EU statement in the UN Summit clearly referred to this and clarified the EU's position.

5) Progress made by the European Commission/European Union on Gender Equality and Development Cooperation

— All EU/EC policies are based on the above covenants and documents and in some areas the EU played a leadership role to reach the international consensus while sometimes the specific EC policy and programming documents seems to reflect the international agenda with a certain delay.

— In the 1990's the main focus of the EC documents moved from women as a target group to gender equality as a development objective and a key instrument to eradicate poverty.

— The 2001 Communication on Capacity building on gender equality and mainstreaming recognised that the capacities of the partner countries and the strategy of the EC had to be developed if we wanted to work towards gender equality and empowerment of women as a twin track approach through mainstreaming and specific actions.

— Only on 2003 in the regulation for gender equality in development cooperation did the EC documents refer for the first time explicitly to gender equality as the overall objective of gender mainstreaming and identified the twin track approach as a clear strategy.

The gender budget line for which the Regulation was adapted in 2003, had a 9m € allocation for three years. The funds go mainly to calls for proposals: For 2004, 2.5m€ was provided for partnerships with local NGOs to reduce gender disparity in education and increasing women's access to decision making.

— For 2005 and 2006 a call for proposals will be launched in December 2005, for a total of 3.9m€ for activities promoting attitude and behaviour change of adolescent boys and girls (aged 14-19 years) to prevent violence against girls and women.

— Between 2001 and today, the guidelines are to include gender equality in country strategies, in programming documents, and in other policy documents (especially policy documents on health, poverty diseases, reproductive health, and education). Training was organised and some services developed more expertise using gender help desks.

— In 2004, our services reassessed the level of *integration of gender* in 24 selected country programmes. The aim was to review if the Mid Term Review reports had made any progress in relation to gender mainstreaming in comparison to the original CSPs. The reports looked at the *availability or lack of*: gender analysis and sex disaggregated data, reporting on MDG No 3 on gender equality and empowerment of women, and reporting on Beijing Plus 5.

The assessment has shown an *overall improvement of 62 percent in comparison with the first generation Country Strategy Papers* a year earlier. Special improvements were reported in terms of gender

integration in focal sectors, particularly in the interventions of education, food security/rural development and transport/sanitation and water. The use of *sex-disaggregated data* has improved overall but is still mostly used in the context of education and the indicator of the elimination of gender disparity in all education levels (MDG 3). However, statistical sex differentiation is seldom made visible in the analysis of e.g. poverty, conflict situations, or the HIV/AIDS situation.

— In 2004 the commitment to the Cairo agenda was restated specifically in Council Conclusions.

— The New Development Policy adopted by the EC in 2005 and now under discussion in the EP and the Council refers in Part II to a strengthened approach to mainstreaming and demand a multi sectoral response for *gender equality*

"...The Commission will re launch this approach, making systematic and strategic use of all resources at its disposal. " "For instance, it will intensify the dialogue with its partners and set up networks of expertise and technical support, pooling the MS resources with those of partner countries."

— In the recently (2005) adopted Africa Strategy (Part 3) the document refers "to a EU strategy to ensure that *gender equality is fully taken into account in all partnerships and in national development strategies including in poverty reduction strategies*. Further in the document refers to the fact that in Africa women constitute the majority of both urban and rural poor. The EU should give priority to the elimination of illiteracy especially among girls and the promotion of their equal access to education, investment in sexual and reproductive health in order to combat HIV/AIDS pandemic, to the reduction of maternal and child mortality, and to the participation of women in conflict prevention, peace building and reconstruction."

— Major budget lines such as the ones on poverty diseases and reproductive health have complemented our instruments to empower women and pursue development cooperation in recent years

The budgetline for "*Aid to Fight poverty Diseases (HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria) in developing countries*" is for implementation in 2003 to 2006. The total amount allocated under this budget line is 351m and includes support for the development of new tools to protect women (eg. Microbicides).

The budgetline for "*Aid for Policies and Actions on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights in Developing Countries*" for implementation 2003 to 2006 for a total amount allocated under this budget line is 74 m €. In 2004 and 2005 the focus was set on meeting the sexual and reproductive health needs of young people (projects awarded in September 2005 totalling 43 m €). This theme includes advocacy on sexual and reproductive health problems and rights of young people including where relevant the prevention of harmful practices such as FGM, "sexual initiation" of young girls by older men and sexual abuse and exploitation of boys and girls.

In 2006 a call for proposal will be launched targeting needs of uprooted people for sexual and reproductive health services and commodities (family planning, safe motherhood, prevention and management of gender-based and sexual violence etc), 18.5 m €. It is to be noted that under special events 2005 UNFPA is being financed under this budgetline 350.000 € for a project to end violence against women, especially in situations of armed conflicts.

The presently discussed thematic programme to redefine the framework for the use of budgets in addition to the country strategies could support the country driven programmes through several complementary actions at the international level and this instrument is presently under discussion and could be envisaged to :

— provide strategic support to programmes that contribute to the achievements of the Beijing Declaration (in particular the BfA)

— organise thematic workshops at regional and global level to promote visibility and enhanced accountability for progress on gender equality and related MDGs

— promote civil society organisations, notably women's organisations and networks in their endeavour to promote gender equality and strengthen women's rights

— collection of gender and age disaggregated data to feed into country programming.

Clearly most of the policies are in place despite some imperfections. It is time to shift the attention of our efforts in development toward implementing the covenants on gender equality in development and poverty eradication through the new aid modalities.

6) Some of the recent achievements made by some of the poorest countries are remarkable and demonstrate how leadership and ownership by the countries is a critical condition to progress. National governments and civil society at large also have key roles to play at country level.

► Since the genocide in 1994, *Rwandan women have played a pivotal role* in political and economic reconstruction. The country's new Constitution guarantees equal rights for women. Rwandan women are assuming roles as community leaders, entrepreneurs, and elected officials. In the multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections in 2003, women gained 49 percent of the seats of the lower house and 30 percent of the seats in the upper house, up from 17 percent in 1990. Rwanda has created local women's councils elected by women only and a government ministry for women to ensure that policies are gender equitable. The outcome has been a *closing gender gap for primary and secondary education, and a declining fertility rate*.

► In the new *South Africa, gender concerns are fully mainstreamed* into the government apparatus. The Commission on Gender Equality, provided for in the Constitution, monitors and evaluates government and the private sector on gender, informs the public, and makes recommendations on laws and policies. The Office on the Status of Women is responsible for developing national gender policy, promoting affirmative action in government, supporting government bodies to integrate gender in all policies and programs, and organising gender training. In 1995 South Africa was one of the first countries to pioneer analysis of the national budget from a gender perspective. The Women's Budget Initiative made the case for reallocating expenditures and revenues to more adequately respond to the needs of women. Some of the measures included the abolishment of cost recovery fees for health services for pregnant women and children. Over the last decade, South Africa has made *significant progress in closing the gender gap*. Women now constitute *31 percent of parliamentarians, maternal mortality has been reduced, and the fertility rate has declined*.

► In *Cambodia*, the government implements its gender policies mainly through the Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs. Over the years its role has evolved into a facilitator for mobilising political and financial support for a broader range of policies addressing the needs of women. The result of such support has been an increase in women's share of non-agricultural employment, and improving health indicators. Cambodia, *with the highest HIV prevalence rate in Asia*, has succeeded in *reducing the national prevalence rate* among adults from 3.9 percent in 1997 to 2.8 percent in 2004. The *share of women among those infected with HIV/AIDS has dropped noticeably since 1997*.

But despite progress many governments in developing countries in general do not do well in protecting women's rights and including women as decision makers and in participatory consultations. In the human development report for 2003 UNDP rates countries using a gender related development index which rates most of the countries according to a number of economic and social indices. At the bottom of the list of 145 countries ranked working upwards we find: Sierra Leone, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Burundi, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Cote D'ivoire, Chad, Zambia, Malawi, Benin, Tanzania, Rwanda, Senegal, Eritrea. *Twenty countries all African*. This table is significant in itself but it also highlights the challenge we have with the new paradigm of development cooperation where the EC/EU increasingly and rightly so supports the policy and programmes for the countries themselves.

In recent years it has become less problematic to talk about gender but the task for a gender desk is still one of the most difficult and less incentivised in many of the agencies including in the Commission. Within

the new paradigms of ownership and partnership the task is only possible if countries themselves bring gender high on the political agenda and accountability is build in at the country level and also for the donors

Real partnership and accountability will therefore require reinforced policy dialogue on gender inequality and significantly increased participation of women advocates at the country level. The UN and European NGOs also have a key role to play at country level to make a change happen in the next decade.

7) Key Challenges for the EU s work on gender equality in development cooperation

I will only briefly talk about the challenges because this is the core of the debate during this conference. I look forward receiving feedback towards concrete actions to include in our strategy to be adopted in the near future.

— Gender mainstreaming must be seen not as an end in itself but as an institutional strategy to achieve gender equality and women empowerment; *gender equality is a crucial objective in its own right* and should not solely be referred to as a means towards poverty eradication but it is fundamental for the realisation of economic and social justice for both women and men.

— *Ownership and partnership in the new aid architecture is crucial and means that donors transfer policy and implementation responsibility to the partner country. Progress is therefore mainly possible if both the donor and the partner country are committed and determined to move into the same direction.*

In our context of gender equality this clearly requires:

- *Leadership* and political commitment towards gender equality and women empowerment at the country level as reflected by national parliaments, civil society organisations and through country legal instruments.

- *Participation and voice*: It is essential that women play a fully represented role in decision-making and implementation, in governments and in administrations. The role of women as elected representatives in national parliaments is an increasingly important aspect for ensuring that gender equality is prioritised in national development plans. In reality women are usually highly under represented in civil society organisations and often excluded from consultation processes on development plans as a recent study from the World Bank demonstrated. The international community can support this through requiring *participation and representation* from civil society and stakeholders in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and National Development Plans and country strategies and increase the resources that directly target support for women's involvement in policy and programme processes at the country level.

- *But the key question not yet fully resolved in the new aid modality architecture I believe is how to organise accountability* to the women, to the partner country and to the donor at the same time .Real ownership can not be obtained unless there is clear accountability of national governments to the national parliaments. Donors including the EC can do better in ensuring that the new aid mechanisms are accompanied by specific measures that strengthen the role of national parliaments in the adoption of country plans and that the new PRSPS and CSPs are based on those national plans. At the same time donors must develop new ways to ensure an adequate degree of accountability with their own parliaments to ensure that their constituencies are not excluded from the new aid architecture. Accountability also implies indicators to measure progress on gender equality even if the new aid modalities such as sector and budget support rarely allow for tracking of budget allocation to gender equality.

- *Donor Partnership* through aligned and harmonised approaches requires shared responsibility and mutual accountability

— Collective work towards common objective of a gender equitable society; Collective action between the EU, EC, development partners in support of a country strategy is important but not

sufficiently developed. Mutual responsibility as stated in the Rome Declaration 2003, and Paris Declaration 2005) should also be operationalised towards the gender commitments.

Conclusions

End with some personal note and with the invitation for the audience to provide feedback from the development of a concrete strategy.