

# GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

FoRS Policy Brief

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## Towards More Equitable and Effective Development Cooperation in the Czech Republic

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## INTRODUCTION

Czech non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) have already given support to women and girls from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. Some of the activities specifically aimed at the empowerment of women and girls have been funded by the Czech government. That is not enough though. There are still many women and girls unable to exercise their basic human rights and control their own lives. There are approximately a billion of them living below the poverty line, which is twice as many as the number of men and boys in the same condition. In times of cuts in development budgets, as now, the Czech government must guarantee that the benefits of development will be divided between the poor women and men more equitably than ever before. In this way the government will make a greater contribution to the reduction of global poverty.

SINCE THE CZECH REPUBLIC RESTARTED ITS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION PROGRAMMES fifteen years ago, Czech NGDOs have facilitated support to HIV-infected women in Namibia and Ukraine, victims of sexual and gender-based violence in Congo and Serbia, and vocational training to women in Burkina Faso and Nicaragua. Credit goes to the NGDOs as well as to their donors, including the government, as these development projects have often been implemented within the framework of the official development cooperation programmes.

THE EFFORTS OF CZECH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS and government in improving the lives of most disadvantaged women is laudable, but represents just a small step in meeting the

commitments in the realm of gender equality made by the Czech government at European and international levels.

IN 2010 AND THE FOLLOWING YEARS, development aid in the Czech Republic will decrease in volume as a result of the economic crisis. This means that quality of aid is going to be even more important, along with accountability to target groups and transparency of aid for the partner countries. The government and NGDOs have so far failed to integrate gender into international development cooperation.

MAINSTREAMING GENDER – and hence using a gender sensitive approach can reinforce the impact of aid on poverty reduction. It can also honour commitments to human rights and social justice worldwide, and strengthen the status of the Czech Republic among donor and partner countries.



### KEY TERMS:

**GENDER** → Socially constructed differences between men and women, differences in expected behaviour of both sexes.

**GENDER EQUALITY** → Equality of men and women, boys and girls before the law, in terms of decisions and livelihood.

**WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT** → Women gaining power and control over their lives, increasing their ability to realize their rights.

**GENDER PERSPECTIVE** → Looking at every development problem from the perspective of both men and women, and boys and girls with the aim of identifying differences in their priorities, needs and ways to help rectify these inequities.

**GENDER MAINSTREAMING** → Integrating a gender perspective into every level of policy and programming, to identify and overcome gender inequalities and achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.

# WHY GENDER PERSPECTIVE IS CRUCIAL TO DEVELOPMENT

**FIRST AND FOREMOST, GENDER EQUALITY IS A HUMAN RIGHT** *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* guarantees all rights and freedoms regardless of sex. The Czech government is legally obliged to honour the rights of women by the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*. Moreover, the Czech Republic has signed the global agenda for women's empowerment – the *Beijing Platform for Action*, agreeing to promote the rights of girls and women as an inseparable part of human rights.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GENDER DIMENSION** and the role of women in development have been further acknowledged by both developing and developed countries including the Czech Republic in the *Millennium Declaration*. The result is the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG 3) to „promote gender equality and empower women”. Other closely related goals are MDG 5 to improve maternal health and MDG 4 to decrease child mortality. However, it is also vital to employ a gender perspective in meeting each of the other MDG goals.

**THE KEY ROLE OF GENDER** in development is also emphasized in the *European Consensus on Development* and the *Accra Agenda for Action*, endorsed, by the Czech Republic and other member states. Besides the legal and political commitments, there is a pragmatic argument for integrating gender approaches into international development cooperation: greater aid effectiveness in the fight against poverty and more efficient public spending in the times of economic crisis and beyond.

**ACCORDING TO THE UNITED NATIONS ESTIMATES** for example, there are twice as many women living at the lowest level of poverty than men. Although women's working hours are much longer than men's, a great part of their work such as child care



## GENDER INDICATORS:

- + **GENDER POSITIVE** → *improvement in the area of gender equality, building the capacity in gender mainstreaming*
- **GENDER NEGATIVE** → *deterioration of gender equality or no change despite the plan to mainstream gender*
- ? **UNKNOWN** → *lack of information*

and housework remains unrecognised and unpaid. Women have less access to land and other productive assets and participate less in political and community decision making. In many countries, they are still disadvantaged by written laws and they often experience human rights violation because of customary laws.

**YET, DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION OFTEN SEES ITS TARGET GROUP AS A HOMOGENEOUS ONE** and fails to see the differences in the situation of men and women, their different needs, experiences, potentials and priorities. Development cooperation often takes the man's perspective of the development problem, as in the majority of world societies, men are the key decision makers within the community and polity, and thus typically become the privileged partners of the donors. Development aid which fails to take into consideration gender relations and the disadvantaged position of women and girls, cannot contribute to making their living conditions better and therefore cannot contribute to the development of the community as a whole.



## DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- *The third Millennium Development Goal has failed, because the target of giving boys and girls equal access to basic education by 2005 has failed to be achieved.*
- *Although in the short run the economic crisis has affected men the most by the loss of their jobs, in the long run women are going to be affected the most, because they form the majority of labour force in non-qualified export branches and informal sector.*
- *If women had the same share in decision-making as men, the number of under-nourished children in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa would decrease by 15 million.*
- *The percentage of women in the parliaments of developing countries has been growing slowly and has so far reached 17 percent. The growth is however faster than in developed countries.*

**SOURCE:** *United Nations: Millennium Development Goals Report 2009;*  
*UNICEF: The State of the World's Children 2007*

## AT PRESENT, GENDER IS HARDLY TACKLED IN THE CZECH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION PROGRAMMES.

Many projects, especially those concerning technical supplies and assistance, are probably more beneficial for men than women, as men are more frequently working in this area. And a rise in men's income does not automatically mean better well-being for women and children. On the contrary, the distribution of money within the family is often unfair. Women generally invest more into the health and education of their children while men may privilege investing in their own welfare and social networks. According to the *DAC Guiding principles for Aid Effectiveness* women reinvest 90 percent of their income in their families and communities, compared to men who reinvest only 30 to 40 percent of their income.

# HOW TO PUT GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTO PRACTISE

**PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY** in practise means incorporating gender as a cross-cutting issue into all policies, programs and projects. Applying gender equality and thus supporting equal opportunities cannot be done without the accompanying empowerment of women, as women must have the ability to utilize and capitalize upon these new opportunities. This so called twin-track approach to gender mainstreaming emphasises that apart from having gender equality as a cross-cutting principle, it is also necessary to create development projects, programmes and grants that improve women's socioeconomic and political situation. Women must gain the power and control over their lives to be able to effectively realize opportunities in terms of rights, decision-making, access to resources and other areas of their lives.

**CREATING MORE DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS AIMED SPECIFICALLY AT WOMEN** does not mean favouring one group at the expense of another. Women constitute one half of the population and occupy disadvantaged positions even within ethnic and sexual minorities or disabled, subcategories which should be also taken into account in women focused projects. In development interventions aimed at women's empowerment, it is necessary to recognize local women's existing capacities, to focus on their education and participation in the economy and political sphere. At the same time, it is crucial to prevent paid economic activities from becoming another burden for women, in addition to the burden of housework and other unpaid activities. That is why men must be equally involved in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment as these goals go hand-in-hand with the changes in power relations between men and women.

**MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY IN PRACTISE** however does not mean that participation of men and women in a project has to be 50/50. A formal addition of a couple of sentences on gender equality in the project sustainability part of the project proposal will not solve the cross-cutting issue. An analysis of the gender dimension is the prerequisite for a successful development intervention. That is why it is crucial for both men and women to participate in the actual identification of the problem.

## FROM GENDER ANALYSIS...

**GENDER ANALYSIS OF POVERTY MEANS LOOKING AT THE DIFFERENT ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN** (boys and girls) in a given society (in a family, in a community, at work, in politics) and therefore at the power relations between men and women. Women have less access to resources, less of a role in decision-making and often are not aware of their rights. Gender analysis is a tool for understanding the causes of inequality between

men and women, because it reveals their different needs, experiences and priorities.

**WHEN CONDUCTING A GENDER ANALYSIS**, the following questions should be asked, for example:

- How are men and women included or excluded from the area of a planned intervention?
- Who has formal and who has informal jobs? Who is using resources like land or loans? Who decides how they are used?
- What other factors such as cultural and religious traditions influence relations between men and women?

**GENDER ANALYSIS SHOULD NOT BE BASED ON ASSUMPTIONS, BUT ON QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA.** In order to do that, different groups of women as well as men should take part in it. For example, a project proposal may fail to identify that women are occupied by housework and do not have time to participate in trainings in agricultural production. Yet even occupied women want to have an opportunity to acquire new information and knowledge in the agricultural sector.

**IT IS ONLY ON THE BASIS OF A GENDER ANALYSIS** that designing a project or a policy in which development cooperation would benefit both men and women is possible. Qualitative and quantitative data should be collected during the phase of project or policy implementation as they can help in evaluating the impact of the project/policy on men and women and on gender relations.

## ... TO GENDER INDICATORS

In order to measure the progress made in the area of gender equality, simple indicators can be set. These indicators can be applied even for projects designed without a gender analysis. By assessing the impact of the project from gender perspective, one can find out if the project has contributed to the improvement or deterioration of gender equality. The development policy-makers and practitioners should have the following objective: to increase the number of "gender positive" interventions and to decrease the number of projects in the "gender negative" and "unknown" group (Gender Indicators).

**PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY** and women's empowerment can be seen in some cultures as an imported concept, incompatible with the local environment and traditions. However, gender analysis can serve as a tool for understanding the local context and for designing the best possible way to address the development problem from a gender perspective, for example by localising the terminology while complying with the principals of just development aid. (Experience with gender mainstreaming in Indonesia)

## FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

**AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GENDER DIMENSIONS** of development cooperation has been gradually growing among the Czech development policy-makers and practitioners. It is high time for both the government and the non-governmental organisations, from both gender and development areas, to unite and strengthen their efforts in increasing the effectiveness of development cooperation. In times of crisis and beyond, the Czech Republic should not decrease the volume of development cooperation without at least taking part in improving its quality. Such quality can be brought about by mainstreaming gender into international development cooperation.

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CZECH GOVERNMENT

- Set gender as a cross-cutting issue in international development cooperation and pay attention to gender in other key documents (strategy papers, country programmes, sector strategies). Take a twin-track approach and support projects aimed specifically at women's empowerment.
- Take a gender perspective into account in all stages of the program and project cycles of development cooperation. This should include representation of women's interest in partner countries during the programme and project identification and on women's participation during the project formulation. Monitoring and evaluation should include gender analysis and gender indicators.
- Develop practical tools, guidelines, check-lists and dedicate necessary budget and expertise to integrating gender in programmes and projects
- The government unit responsible for promoting gender equality at the national level should be actively involved in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in international development cooperation.

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CZECH NON-GOVERNMENTAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS (NGDOs):

- Build capacities in gender issues, based on a gender audit of their organisation (internal and external affairs) and by formulating a gender policy.
- Develop guidelines for a gender analysis, and integrate gender into project cycle.
- Focus on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in both public educational activities and policy work.
- National women/gender non-governmental organisations should share their knowledge and expertise with NGDOs home and abroad. At national level they should play the role of a "watchdog" along with the NGDOs, ensuring that gender is effectively mainstreamed in government development policy and practice.



### EXPERIENCE WITH GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN INDONESIA

*A Caritas Czech Republic project in Indonesia shows how gender analysis helps to make development cooperation more effective. The Sustainable Livelihoods project in the post-conflict area of Aceh Jaya district aims at improving the livelihoods of communities focusing on the area of agriculture and agro-forestry. Following the advice of an experienced partner organisation from Canada, Caritas undertook a gender analysis of the agricultural sector the results of which were used in revising the project plan.*

*The analysis justified the different needs of men and women, the impact of the long-lasting conflict on men and women, the position of widows and women-headed households, the division of labour between men and women in households and in the agricultural sector. The analysis showed for example that alongside conflict-widows, who are respected and supported by the society, there are other groups of neglected widows, who had been forgotten in the original project proposal. Furthermore, the study disproved the assumption that women are not involved in harvesting tree crops and that they do not need training in agro-forestry. The analysis also pointed out that under the ongoing power relations women feel better, if they can work with female field workers and if trainings are organized separately for men and women.*

*Thanks to this gender analysis, Caritas has updated the project proposal focusing on all types of women headed households, ensuring that women participate in the project and are part of the project team. At first the local staff strongly opposed the gender analysis, but the experienced Canadian partner has helped to solve the disputes including abandoning the term "gender" and replacing it with the term "inequality in access to job opportunities". The project management team however continues to use the term "gender" and expects that evaluation is going to gender-sensitive project on poverty reduction in the region.*

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