



"Strengthening Implementation of the EU Gender Equality Action Plan"

Summary on the workshop organised by the Practitioners' Network for European Development Cooperation, One World Action, and the European Commission on 23 March 2011 in Brussels

The EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development (2010-2015) was adopted in June 2010 as an annex to the Council Conclusions on achieving the MDGs. It proposes a series of actions to be carried out by the EU Member States, the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS). The objective is to improve the way we work on gender and to strengthen a coordinated EU approach to promoting gender equality in Development. Member States, the Commission and the EEAS will have to report on progress by December 2011.

Almost one year after its launch, 30 gender experts from 22 different countries and organisations came together to share reflections, challenges and lessons about implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan's commitments in practice. Participants included gender experts from EU Member States in Ministries and/or Development Agencies (and non-Member States such as Norway and Switzerland), gender focal points from EU Delegations. Participants had different levels of expertise and knowledge about the commitments contained in the Action Plan.

The day was organised into two parts: the morning was a plenary general session on the Gender Action Plan and related topics such as aid effectiveness and gender mainstreaming. The afternoon session was devoted exclusively to the Gender Action Plan involved working in groups.

The Workshop started with welcoming and introducing words from Simon Williams/DFID (the current Presidency of the Practitioners' Network). The coordinator of the Network, Katja Legien, then briefly explained the objectives and structure of the Practitioners' Network.

In a first presentation Victoria CORREA, Policy Officer for Gender Equality from the Commission introduced the participants to the EU Gender Action Plan and its implications for EU Member States. She gave an overview on the background, process and main actions contained in the Plan. Some questions were posed concerning the reporting on progress, and issue that was left open as it was to be discussed in the EU MS meeting on Gender held the following day.

A second presentation was given by Dr. Nathalie HOLVOET from the Institute of Development Policy and Management, University of Antwerp on "Aid effectiveness and gender equality: how to strengthen gender equality outcomes in development cooperation". There is a clear need to engender the aid effectiveness process and there are a number of ways of doing this. Nathalie gave an overview on how we can engender the aid effectiveness agenda and what opportunities and challenges exist to this end. In this context, several activities in the EU Gender Action Plan constitute entry points for increased gender-sensitivity in the process i.e. the OECD gender policy marker, the country gender profile etc.

Nathalie also explained that there is a shift in emphasis from implementation to evaluation/results. She recalled the hierarchy of input-activity-output-outcome-impact. To her mind, outcome/impact indicators are good for learning, but not for accountability as there are too many external factors



that make it difficult for governments to achieve the desired result/impact. At the same time this is an easy excuse for non-achievement. Nathalie's opinion was not shared by all participants leading to an interesting debate.

A number of objectives in the EU Gender Action Plan deal with improving and increasing gender mainstreaming. Systematically ensuring that gender is an integral part of all development programmes and projects is a challenge for many Member States, as well as for the Commission. In this context, and in order to learn from each other, a presentation was delivered by Dr. Annemarie SANCAR on the gender mainstreaming strategy of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). SDC has a number of milestones when it comes to mainstreaming gender ranging from the gender responsive budgeting initiative, to gender analysis of expenditures in 07 and 08. They also carry out a number of trainings and capacity building on this issue. Interestingly they make use of case studies, gender specific analysis, evaluations and discussion to turn them into public goods. However, they face some challenges that most of us are confronted with such as lack of sex-disaggregated data, or volatility of responsibilities and functions.

In the following Q&A session she further elaborated that SDC gender trainings are not mandatory for the staff, but that there is quite a broad range of gender trainings e.g. at regional level for gender mainstreaming in sectors for project managers to develop gender sensitive indicators. There are global budgets, regional and some country budgets to offer targeted activities for gender mainstreaming. From Dr. Sancar's experience, it works best to use illustrative case studies to translate the debate on gender into decisions or change.

In the afternoon the participants were divided into four working groups on 3 topics that regroup the actions in the Gender Action Plan under three headlines, concentrating on those actions and commitments that are most relevant to the Member States. The group members shared experiences, best practices and discussed how to implement the activities related to the topics in each of their groups i.e. translate them into concrete activities.

After the small group discussion, a representative of each group explained their ideas. The full documentation of the working group results can be found in a separate document. Below some examples of activities/comments around which the discussions circled in the different groups:

Gender Mainstreaming in the Political and Policy Dialogue and other interventions (2 groups):

- Ensure that national Action Plans are the basis for any interventions on gender equality in order to maximise partner country ownership
- Be flexible on targets such as the 50% Policy Dialogue content marker - GE must recognise cultural contexts but at the same time be defended robustly when appropriate
- Identify why national budgets may not be gender sensitive and propose remedies/technical assistance if appropriate
- Analyse civil society in partner countries to identify key players (do not engage indiscriminately as some civil society members may not be sympathetic or influential)
- Ensure that template for calls for proposals include gender equality outputs and assessment of likely impact on gender equality. Calls for proposals and bids to be appraised using a gender screening check list.



- Calls for proposals should also include assessment of NSA capacity for implementing gender equality and may need to include capacity building funding if necessary
- Provide more clarity on the role of a 'lead donor' on gender: Is it coordinating, monitoring, driving forward- a combination of all three? There should be some terms of reference/ guidance to be suggested by the Commission.
- EU Heads of Mission (MS and Commission) to be encouraged to report on a six monthly basis on GE activities. Overall results should be disseminated in the EC Annual Report on External Assistance

Capacity Building:

- There has to be a general recognition that 'gender is not for free'. There will be administrative costs and time required on internal capacity building.
- But there is a need to incentivise work on GE. There should be more evidence of clear funding connected to the Gender Action Plan. Lobbying by Member States for increased funding in the next Multi Annual Financial Framework should begin now.
- The case for increasing GE funding should be evidence based and could be developed on case studies of successful initiatives
- We need to learn from the example of those MS that have absorbed GE in over 75% of their activities- such as Sweden.
- All EU heads of mission (MS and Commission) should have mandatory GE training before taking up post. They need to set the example for others in their institution to follow.
- Evidence of Gender awareness / expertise should be a requirement in programme management job descriptions.
- It would be good to consolidate the implementation experience of the EU and UN Women in one consolidated knowledge package
- Let's share knowledge of good incentives such as examples of awards within agencies for best GE projects

Defining Indicators/Measuring Impact:

- Recommend the setting up of a working group of the Commission and interested MS.
- We should not re-invent the wheel but look at existing indicators and map their effectiveness.
- Recognise that not all EU Member States are members of DAC/OECD (such as Romania) and are therefore not using DAC/OECD indicators

Overall, more than 25 interesting suggestions or comments were made and led to a fruitful discussion.

In her closing remarks Victoria Correa expressed her satisfaction with the Workshop outcome and that the workshop seemed to have been a useful exercise for further spreading awareness of the EU Gender Action Plan and for stimulating Member States to think about their roles and activities in implementing the different actions.

The documents related to this Gender Workshop on March 23rd can be found on the Practitioners' Website under www.dev-practitioners.eu.