



# Gender Equality and women's empowerment in Czech Official Development Assistance

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## Summary of conclusions and recommendations

Gender equality is embraced by the international community as the cornerstone of sustainable development and remedy against poverty and social exclusion. The Czech Republic is very vocal on human rights but this study looks into how the Czech commitment towards gender equality is put into practice. While gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment represent well refined conceptual tools used in development practice, their integration into national policies and strategies remains a big challenge. In the new Czech strategy these concepts are effectively skeletonised and their transformative potential is sent into exile. Similarly, in the projects' cycle proceedings gender reflection is treated as an obstacle to be avoided and local gender power relations as out of reach. But probably the most depressing situation is revealed by a scrutiny of the long-term educational programme in Angola, mainly because its three subsequent projects lead to massive men's empowerment despite data from various sources showing apparent gender inequality. Do we really want to take part in development assistance of this kind? If not, then there is a lot to do in terms of raising general awareness and knowledge of gender issues in the Czech development assistance strategies, policies and implementation in order to achieve its higher political, financial and thematic prioritization in the next few years and in the oncoming programming period.



## Table of contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Acronyms and abbreviations  | 2  |
| 1. Introduction   | 6  |
| 2. Methodology  | 7  |
| 3. Presentation of findings   | 9  |
| 3.1 Gender Equality and Czech development policies and strategies   | 9  |
| a) Civil society and gender equality in CZODA   | 11 |
| b) Priorities, Principles and Gender Equality   | 11 |
| c) Project Cycle and Gender Equality  | 13 |
| d) Gender equality and Czech policy makers  | 16 |
| 3.2 National context of partner country - Angola  | 19 |
| 3.3. Policy in practice   | 33 |
| a) Czech Republic's Development Assistance in Angola  | 33 |
| b) Project's analysis - People in Need: Support for Basic Education<br>in Remote Areas of the Province of Bié | 24 |
| 3.4. Comparing policy and practice: key findings  | 28 |
| 4. Recommendations  | 31 |
| Conclusions   | 33 |
| Bibliography  | 35 |
| <b>List of tables</b>   |    |
| Table 1   | 23 |
| Table 2   | 25 |



## Acronyms and abbreviations

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| AfDB       | African Development Bank  |
| OMA        | Angolan Women's Organization<br><i>Organização da Mulher Angolana</i>   |
| ADAC       | Association for Development of Rural Communities<br><i>Associação para o Desenvolvimento e Apoio ao Campo</i> |
| CIA        | Central Intelligence Agency   |
| CEDAW      | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination<br>against Women                                 |
| CR         | Czech Republic  |
| CSO(s)     | Civil Society Organization(s)   |
| CZDA       | Czech Development Agency  |
| CZODA      | Czech Official Development Assistance   |
| CZU        | Czech University of Life Sciences<br><i>Česká zemědělská univerzita</i>                                       |
| DA Council | Development Assistance Council  |
| DDA        | Department of Development Assistance  |
| DHRTTP     | Department of Human Rights and Transformation Policy  |
| EU         | European Union  |
| FORS       | Forum for Development Cooperation<br><i>Fórum rozvojové spolupráce</i>  |
| GDP        | Gross Domestic Product  |
| GE         | Gender Equality   |
| GPI        | Gender Parity Index   |
| IFAD       | International Fund for Agricultural Development   |
| JPG        | Joint Gender Programme  |
| MDG(s)     | Millennium Development Goal(s)  |
| MFA        | Ministry of Foreign Affairs   |
| MINFAMU    | Ministry for Family Affairs and Advancement of Women  |
| MPLA       | People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola<br><i>Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola</i>            |
| NGO(s)     | Non-governmental Organization(s)  |
| OECD       | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  |



|          |  |
|----------|--|
| OECD-DAC | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development<br>Development Co-operation Directorate             |
| PiN      | People in Need<br>Člověk v tísni   |
| PROMAICA | Catholic Church Movement to Support Angolan Women<br><i>Promoção da Mulher Angolana na Igreja Católica</i> |
| TOR      | Terms of reference   |
| UN       | United Nations   |
| UN GA    | United Nations General Assembly  |
| UNDP     | United Nations Development Programme   |
| UNICEF   | United Nations Children's Fund   |
| UNIFEM   | United Nations Development Fund for Women<br><i>Fonds de développement des Nations unies pour la femme</i> |
| UNSC     | United Nations Security Council  |
| USA      | United States of America   |
| ZRS ČR   | Czech Official Development Assistance<br><i>Zahraniční rozvojová spolupráce České republiky</i>            |



## 1. Introduction

Gender equality features as a basic principle in the most fundamental texts of today's international system. Also, the EU *acquis communautaire* perceives gender equality as one of its essential values. The Community embraces the twin-track strategy in terms of (a) cross-cutting integration of equality between women and men into all EU policies and activities and (b) specific initiatives for women's empowerment, with the ultimate goal of gender equality. As a European Union member since 2004 the Czech Republic formally adheres to all these Treaties, Declarations or Resolutions. This implies that Czech decision-makers should employ gender mainstreaming in their strategies, policies, decisions and actions with clear understanding of all the effects these might have on women and men and with the aim of removing instead of pursuing inequality. In the same vein where deemed appropriate the actors should also make specific decisions for women's empowerment in any social context. The Czech Official Development Assistance (CZODA)<sup>1</sup> as an integral part of the Czech foreign policy should strive to fulfil these commitments while adjusting policies to the local context when needed and appropriate.

This is how the CZODA actors should act, however, even if they fail to do so, there is no tool to punish them and enforce the norm. As both the international community and the EU very often lack the authority, legitimacy and appropriate instruments, the implementation of respective commitments rests pretty much upon the national States, their institutions, bureaucracies and civil society organizations. Thus, the theory on the paper and the reality on the ground might be quite different.

Since its re-inception<sup>2</sup> in 1995, the CZODA has undergone profound changes. Initially much fractured and often considered being just a pro-export policy tool, its institutional structure has streamlined substantially and its rationale has broken all ties with economic interests, at least in principle. In this respect a very important step was taken with the country's accession to the European Union (2004), the OECD-DAC Peer Review Process (2007) and during the country's presidency over the EU Commission (2009). Today, the Act on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance (2010) provides the CZODA with a clear legislative and institutional structure, and several strategic, conceptual and policy documents regulate its implementation.

To which extent has the CZODA lived up to the Czech Republic's international and European commitments towards gender equality? Is the new CZODA setting an environment conducive

1 This study only analyses the bilateral dimension of the CZODA.

2 Former Czechoslovakia had a substantial tradition in Development Assistance. The first "Guidelines for the Provision of Development Assistance" were issued as the Government's decision (no. 153 and its attachment) on 13 March 1995.



to pursuing gender equality in development assistance? Are there any barriers to development and implementation of gender sensitive strategies and policies? What is to be done concerning gender equality in the new situation and within the new setting? With the aim to step forward in answering these questions the study pursues the following main objectives:

- Gather solid evidence about how Czech policy commitments concerning gender equality in development cooperation are (or are not) being translated into action;
- Ensure that recipients of Czech Development Cooperation in Partner countries express their views on what needs to be done to fully implement gender equality policies;
- Formulate sound recommendations to push gender equality into the centre of the Czech development cooperation and strengthen such environment for CSOs to incorporate gender equality in Czech development cooperation.

The study starts with presentation of its methodology and goes on to analyse gender equality aspects in the CZODA official policies and strategies. Further, it presents the contemporary social, political and economic situation in Angola, hitherto CZODA, in this country and analyses a selected CZODA programme. Subsequently, it lays down the key findings and recommendations for different stakeholders.

## 2. Methodology

The primary aim of this study is to look for possible answers to the following questions: to which extent has the CZODA lived up to the Czech Republic's international and European commitments towards gender equality? Does the new CZODA set an environment conducive to pursuing gender equality in development assistance? Are there any barriers to development and implementation of gender sensitive strategies and policies? What is to be done concerning gender equality in the new situation and within the new setting?

This study sees gender equality *normatively*, as respecting equal rights, opportunities and status of all people irrespective of their gender and equally considering, valuing and favouring the different behaviour, aspirations and needs pertinent to each gender. Further, the *essence* of gender is understood here as a set of ideas socially constructed and reconstructed in the continuous process of human communication (on social constructivism see e.g. Wendt 2003). For addressing this continuous process in this research an analytical concept of *discourse* is invoked as a system of signification, which possesses the ability to define and demarcate the realm of the *common sense knowledge*. Discourse makes specific things taken for granted, while prescribing them as meaningful, and silences other possibilities by either ignoring them or presenting them as void



of meaning or incomprehensible. Similarly, discourse also defines *subjects* authorized to speak and to act and creates meaning via *binary dichotomies*, where the meaning of one term is built upon the other, representing its clear opposite. Thereby it produces dichotomies like modern/traditional, developed/developing, European/Third World, etc. Often we can witness discursive strategies subsuming the better part of the dichotomy into the notion of *us*, while the worst part is exported into *them*, so the dichotomy of *us/them* becomes the overarching one (on discourse see e.g. Milliken 1999). The above quoted analytical tools were used in the research via the means of axial coding and hermeneutical interpretation.

### **Case selection**

The initial aim of the research was to focus on the CZODA official setting and also the CZODA projects implemented in three different partner countries. One of the projects was to be from an Eastern European country, whereas the other two from Sub-Saharan Africa. Bearing in mind the research objectives, long-term and large-budget projects without specific focus on women were preferred, allowing focusing on gender mainstreaming. Further, the diversity of the projects in terms of thematic focus and implementing actors was a key factor in selection. Based on preliminary desk research and the above mentioned criteria, one project from Angola and Ethiopia and two from Moldova were selected. Due to serious problems encountered during the research, mainly inaccessibility of data and personnel changes in the research team, only the Angolan case is presented in this study, the CZODA programme in Angola called *Support for Basic Education in Remote Areas of the Province of Bié* (title according to the Czech Development Agency - CZDA). This project was chosen primarily because of its length (2006-2012) and considerable budget allocation (77 210 306,- CZK – ca. 3 million Euro).

### **Data collection**

For the purposes of this study the principle of data triangulation was pursued so that information on specific issues comes from different data sources. With respect to the research questions the principle of theoretical saturation was applied, i.e. relevant data were collected until they stop producing significant advances in research and in understanding to the studied problems. The CZODA official strategies and policies were studied through publicly available documents and through interviews with four CZODA civil servants (three from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - MFA, when two from the Department of Development Assistance and Humanitarian Aid (DDA), one from the Department of Human Rights and Transformation Policy (DH RTP) - and one from the Czech Development Agency (CZDA)). The programme Support for Basic Education in Remote Areas of the Province of Bié was analysed through publicly available or internal documents, as



well as through interviews with two members of the Czech implementing team (People in Need – PiN); one of them was based in Prague and had substantial field experience from Angola, the other was the Education Programmes Manager working on the analysed CZODA programme in Bié for approximately three years. In addition, the role of the Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations was addressed in an interview with a worker from the Forum for Development Cooperation (Fórum rozvojové spolupráce – FORS) and with three members of the FORS gender working group. From a more theoretical perspective an interview with a member of academia was carried out (Department of Gender Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague). All of these interviews were conducted in person between 15 August and 8 September 2011. Serious problems emerged when conducting interviews in partner countries. Lack of resources prevented data collection in the field and the remoteness of the researched region in Angola ruled out the possibility of using information technologies to carry out interviews. Therefore, it was very important that a member of the Czech implementing team (the Education Programme Manager) conducted a questionnaire survey. As a result we obtained seven questionnaires filled out in Portuguese (5 October 2011). All respondents were women, including a senior member of the local training staff attached to the analysed programme, one local Civil Society activist attached to a Church and five teachers, direct beneficiaries of the programme.

### **3. Presentation of findings**

#### **3.1 Gender Equality and Czech development policies and strategies**

As a member state of the European Union, the Czech Republic should strive to fulfil its commitments towards gender equality. The EU Consensus on Development (European Parliament, Council, Commission 2006), herein the Consensus, presents a shared vision to guide the EU activities in the field of development cooperation, both at national and the Community level. The Consensus considers gender equality as one of the five common principles of the EU development cooperation and sees gender equality as both a cross-cutting issue and an objective in itself. The Consensus adopts the twin-track strategy saying gender equality should be mainstreamed into all Community initiatives and promoted by specific actions for the empowerment of women: *'The empowerment of women is the key to all development and gender equality should be a core part of all policy strategies'* (European Parliament, Council, Commission 2006: 2./11.). Moreover, the new EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development for 2010-



2015 (European Commission 2010) issued by the European Commission and reported against yearly by all member states promoted gender equality to the level of policy dialogue. How are the international and European commitments towards gender equality reflected in the Czech development policies and strategies?

In recent years, the CZODA system has been going through a process of reform initiated by the Government in 2007. Externally, the reform agenda was informed by the OECD-DAC Peer Review Process (2007) and by the World Bank recommendations (on this see Government of the CR 2010, section: 3.3). Also, during the Czech EU Presidency in 2009 specific priorities in this field were articulated, specifically the availability of sustainable energy technologies at the local level and the Eastern European dimension. In the course of the reform, several important documents were approved by the Czech authorities, mainly the Act on development cooperation and humanitarian aid (Parliament 2010), hereinafter the Act, the Development Cooperation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2010-2017 (Government 2010a), hereinafter the Strategy 2010-2017, Methodology of the Bilateral Official Development Assistance Project Cycle (MFA 2011a)<sup>3</sup>, hereinafter the Methodology and the Development Programmes of cooperation for Bosnia and Herzegovina (MFA 2011b), Moldova (MFA 2012a) and Mongolia (MFA 2012b), further also referred to as the Programmes. New Principles for the Provision of the CZODA and Programmes of Cooperation for Ethiopia and Afghanistan are still to be published to match the pledge made in the Strategy 2010-2017 (Government of the CR 2010, section 4.1.1, C and 7.1), and thereby complete the reform process.

The Act describes the CZODA as:

*'the set of activities ... aimed at contributing to the eradication of poverty in the context of sustainable development, including fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, economic and social development, the environmental protection, as well as the promotion of democracy, human rights and good governance in the developing countries'* (Parliament 2010, § 2).

It sets the MFA as the principal actor, pursuing the political, conceptual, programming and evaluating part. Two MFA departments are involved in these tasks, namely the DDA and DH RTP. The implementation role is attributed to the CZDA, a separate institution run by the MFA. Projects in partner countries are monitored by the respective Czech Embassies, together with the CZDA in case of monitoring mission. The Act does not contain any explicit reference to gender issues or women's rights, which clearly means that gender equality has not yet been embraced at the level of high politics and legislation. Also as regards budgeting gender issues are neglected, as gender

<sup>3</sup> MFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.



equality has never had any concrete budget allocation within the CZODA financial scheme (see for example Government 2010b). However, gender equality comes into play in the Strategy 2010-2017, which aims to integrate the CZODA 'into the current foreign policy, economic, security, social and environmental context' (Government 2010a, section 2). In the Strategy 2010-2017 gender equality features as one of the three cross-cutting principles. The main priorities and principles enunciated in this document are summed up below, but first let us focus briefly on the role of the civil society sector in the CZODA system.

#### **a) Civil society and gender equality in CZODA**

NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) are the main implementing actors of the CZODA and to a certain extent are involved in the CZODA strategy and policy making processes. This is formalized in FORS<sup>4</sup> where they have an advisory status in the inter-ministerial Development Assistance Council (DA Council). The DA Council provides coordination and coherence of the CZODA within the Government and takes part in formulating strategic documents, yearly development assistance plans, evaluations, Programmes of cooperation, as well as documents for approval by the EU Council and by other international organizations in the field. FORS is represented in the DA Council by its staff, not by its members directly. The same concerns the Entrepreneurial Platform for Development Cooperation representing the business sector.

FORS is the main instrument used by the civil society sector for lobbying in Czech and European institutions. It can bring up a topic to be discussed within the DA Council, as well as comment and develop the drafts of the respective documents processed in the Council (e.g. Programmes of cooperation). However, as FORS is not eligible to vote and hence has no power to push through its suggestions, it can only try to influence the Council's voting members. Gender became a strategic issue for FORS first during the 2009 Czech EU Presidency. Later, a Gender working group was formed within FORS, functioning as a focal point towards the DA Council and non-governmental actors. Among other activities FORS issues yearly AidWatch shadow reports on the CZODA.

#### **b) Priorities, Principles and Gender Equality**

The Strategy 2010-2017 sets the territorial and sectoral priorities and the cross-cutting principles for the bilateral dimension of the CZODA.

Territorial priorities are based on the hitherto bilateral relations, the need for development in partner countries, the preparedness for aid and the labour division among donors. Under these

<sup>4</sup> FORS is open to NGOs, academic institutions and private persons. As of 19 March 2011 it had 60 members and observers, see [www.fors.cz](http://www.fors.cz).



criteria, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia, Moldova and Mongolia were selected as the Programme countries. The long term policies, priorities and strategies in these countries should be elaborated in the respective Programmes of cooperation. Five other countries (Georgia, Cambodia, Kosovo, Palestinian autonomous region and Serbia) were selected as priority countries for the medium-term development assistance without elaboration of the comprehensive Programmes of cooperation. There is also a group of countries which are soon to phase out of the CZODA (Angola, Yemen, Vietnam and Zambia).

Sectoral priorities of the CZODA, specifically the Environment, Agriculture, Social development (including education, social and health services), Economic development (including energy) and finally the Promotion of democracy, human rights and social transformation, were established upon the principles of the international community, the Czech added value given by country-specific experiences and comparative advantages as well as the division of labour among Donors. Further there are the cross-cutting principles shared by the beneficiaries: Good (democratic) governance; Respect for the environment and the climate and Respect for the basic human, economic, social and labour rights, including gender equality. As regards gender equality as a cross-cutting principle the Strategy states that:

*'...poverty has different impacts on men and women; also, women's participation in development is limited, which adversely affects its efficiency. In accordance with the European Consensus on Development (2005), the Czech Republic will strive for equality at two levels: mainstreaming, i.e. the application of this perspective in the programming of development cooperation and in various stages of the project cycle; thematic, i.e. through specific projects aimed at empowering women.'*

Further, the Strategy also states that the principles contained in the UNSC Resolutions no. 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 are *'designed to enhance the effectiveness of development projects in conflict and post-conflict areas ... whilst empowering women. The Czech Republic will seek to reflect these practices in development cooperation.'* (Government 2010a, section 4.1.2 B).

Gender equality has been included in the 2010-2017 strategy in full conformity with the European (twin-track) and international (UNSC Resolutions) commitments. Compared to the previous Strategy 2002-2007, which contained only a vague reference to *'equal standing of women, children and other vulnerable groups and ensuring for their access to education'* within the then cross-cutting goal of *'Promotion of democracy, human rights and social justice'* (Government 2002:3), the current situation represents a clear improvement. Gender equality in a form of a coherent set of ideas has been pushed into an important strategic document. However, the Strategy only concentrates on a very limited fraction of the two very broad and complex concepts, gender mainstreaming and women empowerment. Gender mainstreaming usually implies:

*'the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including*



*legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality' (UN GA, chapter IV, section A./4./1./A).*

Yet, the Strategy sees mainstreaming as reflection of gender equality only *'in the programming of development cooperation and in various stages of the project cycle'* (see above). The word *various* actually means a distinct shift from the primary meaning. *At various stages* simply does not mean *any action, all areas and all levels* of a project cycle. Furthermore, the implicit interpretation of women empowerment in the Strategy is also limiting, as the Strategy explicitly connects women empowerment with the activities in conflict and post-conflict areas, whereas the concept primarily refers to increasing the women's strengths in any social context.

The Strategy reflects gender equality in a limited and possibly misleading manner. Still, it says clearly that gender equality should be taken into account in the programming and in various stages of the CZODA project cycle. Therefore let us trace gender equality perspective in the official setup of the project cycle.

### **c) Project Cycle and Gender Equality Programming**

Programming is the initial phase of the CZODA project cycle and is actively pursued by the CZODA institutions with respect to the Programme countries only.<sup>5</sup> For all the other countries it holds: *'the programming phase is not executed. The programming frame is made by the general CZODA priorities, partner countries development needs and it stems from the principles given in the Strategy 2010-2017'* (MFA 2011a, section 3.1.).

To this date, only three out of five Programmes have been officially released. Only for three out of fourteen partner countries within the CZODA the full scale programming has been accomplished including the gender equality perspective. Consequently, as early as in the programming stage gender equality is being omitted.

Three currently available Programmes are actually of the second generation. The first generation contained eight Programmes of cooperation (2006-2010), out of which Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Mongolia proceeded into the second generation Programme countries, accompanied by Afghanistan and Ethiopia. Šimůnková (2009) argues that the first generation Programmes saw women solely as mothers, and therefore cared about their maternal health, employment and

<sup>5</sup> The programming phase is to be carried out under the conduit of the DDA MFA (see MFA 2011a, section 3.1.).



education. She notes that: *'only the Mongolian and Vietnamese Programmes go beyond this level to cover women's political role and recognise domestic violence'* and further:

*'GE's [Gender Equality's] transformational aspect does not feature, since there is no acknowledgment of men's roles and also of the rights and needs of diverse minorities within the women's groups are depicted in Programmes as homogenous'* (Šimůnková 2009: 19).

In two of the three available second generation Programme documents, those for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Mongolia, equal standing of men and women and women's empowerment are among the general cross-cutting topics. However, in practice this means that the documents contain one sentence about *'supporting gender equality within the society as well as the most vulnerable social groups'* (MFA 2011b, section 4.2.7). Further the Programme for Bosnia and Herzegovina names women's empowerment among the seven goals within the Government and civil society sectoral priority and it also refers to the UN Security Council Resolutions no. 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 regarding the post-conflict situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (see MFA 2011b section 4.2.7, footnote). In the Programme for Moldova gender aspects are reflected in two out of eight topics to focus on in the sector of Government and civil society, specifically: *'Cooperation in dealing with issues of gender equality in the society [and] Provision of support to the Moldovan government in dealing with the issue of abuse of children and women'* (MFA 2012a, section 4.2.2). Unfortunately, there is nothing more on gender equality or gender relations in the new Programmes.

In comparison with the first generation, the new Programmes are considerably shorter and contain close to no information on the local context in terms of gender relations and the position of women in the society. Reflecting gender issues only marginally and without connection to the local context the second generation Programmes actually offer a much poorer insight than the first generation. However, the strategy further encourages that gender perspective needs to be applied also in *'various stages of the project cycle'* (see above), which is the focus of the next subsection.

### **Identification, formulation, implementation and monitoring, evaluation**

Released in March 2011 the new Methodology is entirely gender blind and focused on the mechanisms of cooperation among the CZODA stakeholders (MFA 2011a). Nevertheless, gender issues are reflected in the annexes containing several important documents to use in the project cycle.

Firstly, in the Initial Project Proposal Form, hereinafter the Proposal form, used in the identification phase, the partner country applicant must provide an analysis of the development problem and *'include cross-cutting issues'* (MFA 2011a, annex 3). Gender disaggregated data on stakeholders and beneficiaries are also required, as is the provision of *'measurable and qualitative outcome indicators*



(disaggregated by sex if relevant) and their current value'. Project strategies are also expected to be formulated from gender perspective. The proposal is then assessed by a committee nominated by the CZDA in the Czech Republic. A template with specific assessment criteria is provided (MFA 2011a, annex 4). Contrary to the Proposal form, this assessment form reflects gender only in one of the three sub-criteria related to the effectiveness of the project. Gender issues constitute maximally half of this sub-criterion (along with environmental, technical and social feasibility), which represents only 5 out of 100 points attainable in the assessment. Gender is also indirectly reflected in the relevance criterion, where the project is gauged according to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), partner countries' Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and cross-cutting principles of the CZODA.

In the formulation phase, two funding schemes can be distinguished: the tender and the grant schemes. In the tender scheme, the project is formulated by the CZDA and then opened for tender. The main selection criterion is usually the price– the lower the better. Within the grant scheme, the project is formulated by the applicants in accordance with the theme of the call for proposals. The committee presents a set of assessment criteria for selection. These are not standardized, but are to be adjusted for each grant theme. Gender is partly reflected in the set of criteria, within the relevance criterion, but again, it only counts for a maximum of 5 out of 100 points.

In the implementation phase, gender is formally included in the yearly and final reporting templates. The implementers are asked to reflect upon their project with respect to equality of men and women in one of the eight sub-sections within the section on the quality and sustainability of the project. These reports also form the basis for of the project monitoring.

The responsibility for evaluation lies within the MFA and is conducted externally. In the evaluation report available for the project *Implementation of modern teaching methods in Ethiopia*, one out of eight evaluation questions concerns gender:

*'To what extent have female pupils benefitted from schooling using modern teaching methods equally to male pupils; and do modern teaching methods as introduced by the project convey any messages of equal opportunities of women and men, explicitly or implicitly, to pupils of both sexes (related to gender equality as one of cross-cutting principles of ZRS ČR)?'* (Bzonková – Šmídová 2011:17, 46).

The Terms of Reference (TOR) also ask the evaluators to *'provide gender-disaggregated data where it will appear useful for users of the Report and where it is realistically possible to obtain such data'* (Bzonková – Šmídová 2011: 49). The report focused mainly on the extent to which girls are involved in the process of tuition, e.g. the possibility of becoming a group leader. Even within such a limited understanding to gender equality the report did not present a clear answer to the question,

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6 CZODA.



because of *'the time constrains and external factors (examination period)'* (Bzonková – Šmídová 2011: 25). It presented just few generic opinions of local interviewees and other development actors on gender issues and quoted generally available statistics. It also presented an opinion that: *'the question of boys' and girls' equal opportunities is more likely to be influenced by the work with the community, which was not the focus of the evaluated project'* (Bzonková – Šmídová 2011: 26). The last sentence implies that the major cause of gender inequality lies within the local community which, purportedly, has nothing to do with the CZODA activities.

The analysis of the CZODA project cycle reflects how superficial the inclusion of gender equality is. Throughout the whole project its implications for both women and men are assessed by rather weak mechanisms and the whole project cycle is very undemanding in terms of the stakeholders' gender expertise, with the exception of the Proposal Form used by partner countries. Due to the lacking mechanisms on the Czech side, increasing gender sensitivity is left predominantly up to the Partners. Moreover, an interview with a CZDA officer revealed that despite being the main actor (e.g. nominating the respective committees, receiving reports, etc.) in the identification, formulation, implementation and monitoring stages of the project cycle, the CZDA does not appoint a person directly responsible for assessing gender equality aspects of the respective projects (18 August 2011).

#### **d) Gender equality and Czech policy makers**

The above analysis suggests that integration of gender equality in the CZODA proceedings is rather dubious. But what do the Czech civil servants think of gender equality and its role in development assistance? The following is a digest on this topic drawn from interviews. It should be pointed out that the MFA has an inter-ministerial equal opportunities working group responsible for gender issues. According to the MFA officer from the DDA who participates in the group its agenda was initially very abstract and theoretical and concerned mainly statistics and general comparison with the other ministries. In the spring 2011, its work picked up after the group focused on the project of the ministerial nursery school / kindergarten. According to this officer:

*'...in this group, we came to a conclusion, that it is better to leave something tangible behind us, something with the potential to help the disadvantaged, that it is better to focus on something specific instead of just meeting, theorizing and complaining... In the end, you realize that the practical part is the most important one, which then provides for the other things, but it wouldn't work without it. The nursery school is a great achievement.'* (DDA MFA officer, 1 September 2011).

This statement shows the officer understands the need for women's specific support in order to positively transform the environment and thereby achieve women's empowerment. Yet, she does not quite see the possible gender transformative effects of the CZODA. In fact, although she



used to be responsible for assessing gender issues in projects within the old CZODA structure, her understanding of the integration of gender perspective in development assistance is very narrow. According to her:

*'Gender perspective is optional, because there are countries, especially the Muslim ones, where gender perspective cannot be set as the main criterion, or even one of them. For instance I remember inquiring what if the project would target males and females equally. The implementers literally laughed at me saying it was impossible, as this would require another parallel project, and hence two budgets.'* (DDA MFA officer, 1 September 2011).

Further the same officer:

*'I have to say that everyone was aware of the fact that with respect to Muslim countries it (gender equality) wasn't stressed enough. People were tolerant when they saw the project's content. What always matters is whom the project concerns and which purpose it should fulfil. If destined for the countries struck by military conflict where women and girls were harmed, the project mainly targeted females, obviously. However, it (gender) is only one of the aspects. We cannot automatically drop a project in Afghanistan just because it does not concern any women.'* (DDA MFA officer, 1 September 2011).

It seems that in her view gender equality in development means that the project must be equally focused on males and females (*quasi mainstreaming*) or it must be destined for women and girls in conflict and post-conflict areas (*quasi women's empowerment*). No wonder she sees integration of gender equality as an obstacle which should not be stressed too much and will eventually be overcome by *being tolerant*. The notion of irrelevancy of a gender perspective was also invoked by other two civil servants from MFA and CZDA, specifically with respect to technical and technological projects. In both cases such reaction came after they were asked why gender equality features so little in the project proposal assessment forms. Curiously, both used a project for sewage plant as an example of why gender is irrelevant to technical projects. They also in perfect accord commented on the fact that gender features as a cross-cutting criterion even for the technical projects, which in the Czech project proposals usually brings *'very formalistic formulations, stating it [the proposed project] doesn't harm anyone, and nothing more.'* (MFA officer, 18 August 2011). They claim that due to this tendency towards formalism its importance among the assessment criteria does not need to be increased. Similarly during the interview a MFA officer from the Department of Human Rights and Transformation Policy revealed that gender equality is not of such importance in his work, also because he *'probably wouldn't know, how to recast non-discrimination and equality into a concrete target group without it already being contained in the other topics'* (5 September 2011).

In one way or the other all civil servants agreed that gender is reflected in the CZODA automatically, thanks to female members in the assessment commissions, the projects or NGOs, or because the



Czech actors are simply endowed by sufficient gender sensitivity. When asked why the assessment forms used in the project cycle were very undemanding in terms of gender expertise towards the Czech actors, as opposed to the Project Proposal which were very demanding in this respect on the partner countries, a DDA MFA officer provided a very illustrative answer:

*'We understand that no target group is discriminated in our projects a priori, while in some countries discrimination of women is set structurally... We do not prevent men and women from studying the same thing and working in the same field. The fact that women are not there might be a question of personal choice... Take Afghanistan: that society is simply structurally reluctant to take advantage of women's potential.'* (DDA MFA officer, 18 August 2011).

When a CZDA officer was asked the same question, he answered:

*'The strategy sees gender as a pronounced, albeit cross-cutting topic. The main topic for CZODA is poverty reduction. Since we take proposals from the partner countries, it is their responsibility to propose projects which would reflect their real situation. We in the CZDA will not purposely force them into gender projects. It is them who can best assess the real situation in their own country.'* (CZDA officer, 18 August 2011).

Further the same officer on the same topic:

*'...we seek to tackle social aspects primarily via grant schemes. This is why we believe that NGOs are perhaps one step ahead of us concerning gender, and therefore will offer us projects which in their conscience fully agree with what we imagine to be a good cross-cutting reflection of gender issues in development.'* (CZDA officer, 18 August 2011).

To sum it up, the interviews revealed that CZODA civil servants perceive gender issues either as an obstacle (in the so called Muslim countries), as being irrelevant (technical projects), or simply as not a topic at all (in programmes promoting democracy). To them women only deserve special attention when obvious victims of direct discrimination (e.g. in the so called Muslim countries) or if they are struck by the consequences of war (quasi empowerment). This is obviously at odds with the primary meaning of these concepts and fits neatly with how these concepts are treated in the Strategy 2010-2017. Furthermore, it is obvious that an informed reflection on gender issues is optional but is generally assumed as automatically given and consequently not worth any critical reflection. We can also see a clear tendency to adjudicate the liability for gender reflection and sensitive policies to the partner countries or NGOs. There is also a striking lack of belief that development policies might transform power relations between genders in their communities, families and households. At least certain sensitivity in this respect can be detected in the MFA working environment.



### 3.2 National context in partner country - Angola

In 1975 Angola proclaimed its independence from Portugal and since then, until 2002, the country has been going through a protracted civil war. The war caused massive migration from rural to urban areas. However, it is hard to estimate the exact numbers on rural and urban population due to dearth of accurate data. Echoes of the war, such as population displacement, landmines, damaged infrastructure and lack of internal trade, still hinder the overall socio-economic development of the country. Since 2002 Angola has enjoyed unprecedented economic growth mainly thanks to its oil industry. Its GDP per capita reached 4,667 USD in 2008<sup>7</sup> (World Bank 2012) and according to the OECD-DAC methodology Angola's reliance on external foreign assistance is minimal, with a Net ODA/Gross National Income of 0.3 per cent in 2009; the single biggest donor being the USA (OECD 2012). In terms of the MDGs Angola progressed substantially in universal primary education (MDG 2) when the Net Enrolment Rate in primary schools rose from 56 per cent in 2005 to 76.3 per cent in 2009. A significant reduction of infant mortality (MDG 4) was also reported, along with improvements in maternal health (MDG 5). With regards to gender (MDG 3), there is an increasing participation of women in Parliament (44 per cent) and in the Government (33 per cent). According to UNDP information, gender parity in primary education has been achieved when Angola reported a Gender Parity Index between 0,95 and 1,05 (UNDP 2012). However, the evidence presented in this study stands in a stark contrast to the latter. In the researched district of Kuemba in the Bié province, less than 4 in every 100 children enrolled in school complete grade 6 and only 1 in these 4 is a girl.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, the trend of women's low access to education is confirmed and entrenched by two recent CZODA programmes focussed on secondary education in the Bié province (see more below).

Abundant in various natural resources Angola stands in an extreme rich – poor and urban – rural divide. The capital Luanda counts as the world's most expensive city (Mercer 2012), yet Angola's Human Development Index is 0.486 for 2011, rating Angola 148<sup>th</sup> among 187 countries and territories (UNDP 2011), and the majority of rural population survives on subsistence farming while having minimal or no access to public services (IFAD 2002, Houdková – Čáp 2009). Illustrating the distribution of wealth between the richest and the poorest, the Gini coefficient for Angola was 0.64 in 2005 - one of the highest in the world (AfDB/OECD 2008:135).

7 Compare to China's 3,414 USD in 2008.

8 In Kuemba the grade 1/ grade 6 survival index is 0,039 and the GPI in the grade 6 enrolment is 0,414 for 2009 (based on Houdková – Čáp 2009).



Today, political power in Angola is concentrated around the President, José Eduardo dos Santos, in office since 1979, and the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). The 2010 constitution grants almost absolute powers to the President. Generally, the Angolan political and governance system is not considered effective and transparent. In the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index the country ranks 168<sup>th</sup> in 182 countries and territories (Transparency International 2011). Angola also comes in as 42<sup>nd</sup> among 53 countries on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2011).

The Ministry for Family Affairs and Advancement of Women (MINFAMU) was set up in 1997 and is responsible for promoting and securing the rights of women. However, the Ministry is reported to be understaffed as a result of low budgetary support (0.8 per cent of government budget). According to the IFAD (2002:4) this may eventually weaken the women's position, as it separates women's issues from the government's mainstream agenda. UNIFEM (now UN WOMEN) supported the Ministry in increasing its capacity through the Joint Gender Programme (JGP). The external review of the JGP commissioned by UNIFEM revealed weak capacity to advocate gender issues in MINFAMU as well as weak technical capability to compile, manage and share information with other key government sectors (Sikumba 2008:5). The Angolan Women's Organization (OMA), a political offshoot of the ruling MPLA, is an important player in the promotion of gender issues. The organization played a significant role in integrating gender issues in the mainstream Government agenda, most notably in the adoption of the family code and a family planning policy for women (1980s), the Land Act (1992) and the Domestic Violence Act (2010). Angola also adopted a national Strategy to Combat Poverty (2003). Regrettably, it sees women merely as mothers and fails to underline that poverty reduction should and will promote gender equity and equality. It does not even include gender equality among its objectives, key goals or general principles; women are not presented as the proposed target groups, protagonists and stake-holders. Moreover, gender issues are not considered a priority area of intervention set forth in this strategy (Government of Angola 2003).

Angola is a signatory to the Beijing Platform for Action and has ratified CEDAW in 1986. The national CEDAW reports from 2002 and 2004 present considerable efforts undertaken to promote women's rights to education, political participation, property ownership and access to the labour market. But they also show that these benefits are nearly unattainable for the heavily marginalized and highly vulnerable rural women of Angola (UN 2002, UN 2004). Traditional norms on property ownership and inheritance usually benefit males (UN 2002:2). Rural women work in the household, on the field and take care of children. Here it should be noted that the Total Fertility Rate in Angola reached 5.97 in January 2012 (CIA 2012). More active outside of the household men participate in project committees, political parties, local administration or fight in war. When traditional culture



meets with the current Angolan schooling system in which the scarce opportunity to attain formal education is outside the household, i.e. in the sphere traditionally occupied by men, the result is a tremendously low level of women's education.

In contemporary Kuemba these cultural factors are further exacerbated by the post-conflict patterns of life. The collapse of formal economic activities represents a serious challenge on men's earning abilities and gender relations in the home. This has been cited as a factor contributing to the upsurge in domestic violence against women and children, strong presence of which was explicitly referred to by two CZODA implementers active in Angola interviewed for this study. Moreover, as so many men lost their lives in the war or fled to other countries, polygamy and its social status are on the rise (IFAD 2002:13). The social and economic pressure to have many children is very strong and woman's fertility is viewed as an important asset for a family.

These findings, drawn from the secondary sources, correspond with the first-hand information acquired in the questionnaire survey conducted by the Czech implementer in Kuemba and received on 5 October 2011. All seven female respondents, out of which three provided their names, indicated extensive work in the house and family duties among the main causes of women's low access to education while six respondents explicitly identified early pregnancy or early marriage in this respect. Two respondents linked low women education to the problems of adultery and one wrote about low access to health care and family planning in this respect. When asked for suggestions for improvement five of the seven respondents explicitly demanded some support, such as training, support to those in need (orphans), home education and also gender quotas for students. One respondent stated explicitly that *'the government should prevent sexual intercourse between an 80-year-old man and a 14-year-old child, because it impedes her education.'* (Ester Faria Frago, 5 October 2012). When asked whether the girls' education is as important as boys' education, six respondents said that it was. This is how the negative answer was justified: *'Girls have much greater responsibility than boys. Before going to school girls have to take care of the household. When boys get up they only have to take care of themselves and then they learn more at school.'* (Professora1, 5 October 2011).

It is quite telling of the local context that four of the respondents mentioned *courage* as an important factor in the process of their education.

The Civil Society sector in Angola is generally under-developed, reflecting the post conflict reality, tight political climate and heavy handed approach of state institutions. For example, on 11 August 2011 a group of foreign civil society leaders was detained and deported (Action for Southern Africa, 12 August 2011). The Angolan Association for Rural Development is quoted as a successful Angolan Non-governmental Development Organization (NGDO) and Rede Mulher as a network of civil society organizations promoting gender issues in Angola (IFAD 2002:5). Providing services for



the population and cooperating with NGOs or international institutions Churches also play very important role in the Angolan society. When asked about NGOs in the Bié province (area only a little smaller than the Czech Republic) the Czech implementer said there was none, except a local branch of Association for Development of Rural Communities (ADAC), which:

*'is not very good. Churches maintain something we might regard as civil society, where mostly women meet to try to tackle hygiene, domestic violence, etc. [...] Men are more likely to be active in politics.'* (Education programme manager, 8 September 2011).

This interviewee pointed to PROMAICA (Catholic Church Movement to Support Angolan Women) as a significant and promising actor in the region in regards to the analysed project.

### 3.3. Policy in practice

#### a) Czech Republic's Development Assistance in Angola

In 2004, Angola became the priority country of the CZODA. The 2006-2010 Programme document (MFA 2006) indicates three main reasons for this: the urgent need for development assistance, long tradition of development cooperation with former Czechoslovakia and high potential for development of mutually beneficial economic relations. The province of Bié (70,314 km<sup>2</sup>, circa 800,000 inhabitants), heavily devastated by the civil war, was set as a territorial priority, while agriculture and education were earmarked as priority sectors. The first CZODA projects in Angola were conducted in cooperation with the Czech University of Agriculture (CZU): the Centre of Agricultural Education in Kuito, the centre of Bié (two projects between 2003-2008, CZK 37,400,000), Consultancy in Fish and Poultry Production (2006-2009, CZK 4,750,000) and Capacity Building in Fish and Poultry Production (2008-2009, CZK 1,870,000). The largest Czech development NGO People in Need (PiN) is also very active in implementing CZODA in Angola and Bié. Since 2006 PiN has been involved in improving the capacity and quality of primary education in Bié (see below). Moreover, the organization also implemented projects on poultry production and marketing (2007-2010, CZK 16,950,000) and on promoting basic agricultural industry (2007-2009, CZK 6,163,000), and ran reading and writing classes (alphabetization courses) for adults in seven Angolan districts (2009-2011, CZK 6,515,000). An educational project was also implemented by the Masaryk University: the Social-Pedagogical Centre in Bié (2008-2010, CZK 7,700,000). Other projects implemented by the CZODA involved information technology, renewable energy and environment protection (total of approximately CZK 4 million). Due to the country's rising economic potential, and in connection with closing of the Czech Embassy in Luanda in March 2010, in 2010 the Czech government decided to gradually stop providing Czech development



assistance in Angola. Between 2003 and 2012 Angola received nearly CZK 176 million (circa EUR 7 million) in CZODA (on CZODA in Angola see MFA 2012c).

Two CZODA educational programmes have been implemented in Bié, one in 2009-2011, the other in 2006-2012. The first one was implemented by the CZU and developed the University's activities in the country, i.e. enhanced the capacity and quality of secondary agricultural education in Bié (CZK 30,556,800 for period 2009-2011), the other programme was implemented by PiN and strives to improve accessibility and quality of primary education in rural areas of Bié (total allocation CZK 77,210,306 for 2006-2012). Among other goals, both of these projects stress the importance of secondary education for local people, young students and adult teachers. Available data show the Gender Parity Index (GPI)<sup>9</sup> for such activities. However, despite simplifying the situation GPI sheds important light on the reality in Bié province and Kuemba district as well as on the Czech actors' position. Within the CZU project, before 2007 secondary agricultural education was provided to 15 female and 85 male students, 2007 witness graduation of 3 women and 14 men. Reviewing the project from gender perspective, Horký (2009) pointed out that it effectively empowered local men by providing them with disproportionate access to education. Within the PiN project, distance training to primary school teachers was provided to 35 female and 257 male teachers between 7/2006-12/2009 (Plecitý 2009, Škovránková 2009). In 2009 the course was successfully completed by 67 men and 9 women (Škovránková 2009, annex 3, p. 23). The resulting GPIs in gross enrolment and in completion are presented in the chart below, together with the GPI for the grade 1 and 6 enrolments in the researched district of Kuemba.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 1**

Gender Parity Index in the CZODA projects in Bié and in primary education in Kuemba

| Indicators →                    | GPI in Gross Enrolment    | GPI in Completion and in grade 6 enrolment |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Data for ↓                      |                           |  |
| People in Need 7/2006 – 12/2009 | 0.136                     | 0.134 (data for 2009 only)                 |
| CZU 2007(Horký 2009)            | 0.176                     | 0.214                                      |
| Kuemba, January 2009            | 0.306 (grade 1 enrolment) | 0.414 (grade 6 enrolment)                  |

<sup>9</sup> The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is calculated as the quotient of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education.

<sup>10</sup> The figure was taken from the Analysis conducted by PiN in 2009 (Houdková – Čáp 2009:16).



When comparing the above figures we can conclude that the CZODA programmes reinforce and even further entrench women's lower access to education in Bié. This happens despite the 2006-2010 Programme Document for Angola which declares that *'the need for women's empowerment is substantial, especially in their access to education ... The Czech assistance is going to systematically contribute towards women's empowerment in Angola.'* (MFA 2006:19).

## **b) Project's analysis**

### **People in Need: Support for Basic Education in Remote Areas of the Province of Bié**

The long-term CZODA programme Support for Basic Education in Remote Areas of the Province of Bié (title according to the CZDA) was selected for this analysis because of its length, considerable budget allocation and also because it was never analysed from gender perspective. Implemented by the Czech based development NGO People in Need (PiN), the programme takes place in Kuemba district, a very remote area heavily ruined by the civil war in eastern part of the Bié province, since July 2006. The programme consists of three separate but corresponding sub-projects. The first project (7/2006 - 12/2008) had been realised in grant scheme under the Ministry of Education's development programme in the old CZODA framework. The 2009 project (tender scheme)<sup>11</sup> had been designed, proposed, approved and financed by the Czech Development Agency, similarly to the current 2010 – 2012 project (grant scheme). The last two projects had been designed before the major legislative, strategic and implementation documents for the new CZODA framework (see section 3.1.) were adopted. An important step in the course of this programme, which heavily influenced the formulation of the current 2010-2012 project, was taken with the Analysis of the Primary Education Sector in Kuemba (hereinafter the Analysis) carried out by the PiN and financed under the CZODA tender scheme (Houdková – Čáp 2009).

The programme, with its main long-term objective of increasing the capacity and quality of primary education in the district of Kuemba, is implemented within the national education scheme in close cooperation with the Angolan authorities. Desk research and interviews with the implementers reveal that gender issues and women's rights have never been part of the design phase of the project. The main referential point throughout the whole programme is *primary education* without any reference to the gender aspects in this area.

Partially thanks to co-financing from UNICEF (USD 523,820 in 7/2006–12/2008) the programme realized considerable amount of tangible outputs, as summarized in the chart:

<sup>11</sup> For a distinction between the grant and tender schemes please see the section 3.1.



**Table 2**

Support of Primary Education in the Rural District of Bié (6/2006-12/2009)

| Outputs →        | General outputs   | Pedagogical training provided – sex disaggregated and GPI  |
|------------------|---|--|
| Sub-projects ↓   |   |  |
| 7/2006 – 12/2008 | 9 schools, 28 classes, 1 auditorium, 9 libraries, 7 teacher’s residencies, 8 latrines, 31,500 schoolbooks, two education centres (Kuito, Kuemba), development of a team of local trainers | In total training provided to 35 women and 257 men - GPI 0.136<br><br>In 2009 67 men and 9 women graduated – GPI 0.134 |
| 1/2009 – 12/2009 | 5700 textbooks and 14,200 examination books between 1/2009-6/2009   |  |

The programme definitely increased the total capacity and quality of primary education in Kuemba. However, it also provided men with even more disproportionate access to education than the programme implemented by CZU. The following lines hopefully provide a better view on the functioning of the agency and on the procedures which lead to such outcomes.

Before the initial 2006-2008 sub-project was formulated no preliminary gender analysis had been conducted and the approved project proposal for the 30-month project was entirely gender-blind. Without taking into account any notion of gender relations, the project was written in generic masculine (e.g. *učitelé – male teachers*), i.e. grammatically the target group consisted of men (PiN 2006). While this does not mean that the project was male-only, it clearly illustrates the lack of perception of gender inequality in access to education stemming from the local context, traditions and customs (see Section 3.2).

The perception of gender issues improved slightly in the reporting of the project, as the CZDA report outline refers to equality of men and women in one of its sub-sections. For instance, the



final report of the 2006-2008 sub-project states quite ambiguously that *'once the schools are open, the selection of students and teachers will be done with maximal emphasis on girls' education, it is impossible to evaluate it now'* (direct translation from Plecítý 2009:17). Additionally, the 2009 sub-project report provides a resigned statement connecting unequal gender representation in the sector of primary education with the *'wider socio-cultural problems of women's position in Angolan society'* (Škovránková 2009: 16). Importantly, the 2009 Analysis shows considerable gender-sensitivity and brings up important quantitative and qualitative data from Kuemba district (Houdková – Čáp 2009). Although the Analysis clearly points out girls' seriously limited access to education and low completion rate (see section 3.3a), they are addressed by the current 2010-2012 sub-project only to certain degree. Specifically, the proposal sets out to raise gender relevant questions during the teachers training and to emphasise the promotion of equal gender participation in the project's activities. Another gender specific feature is its commitment that one of the two external assistants hired during the project shall always be female. In a later phase of the project's implementation - namely when establishing four cluster schools in rural areas of Kuemba and setting up methodology for their management - the Project proposal mentions the issue of girl's participation in primary education as one of the main topics in the methodology (PiN 2010).

On 18 August 2011 and 8 September 2011 the interviews with the two members of the Czech implementing team were conducted, one representative works from Prague and has had substantial field experience from Angola, the other worked as the Education Programme Manager on the analysed CZODA programme in Bié for approximately three years. Based on the interviews the actual implementation of the 2010-2012 project could be reviewed. Thanks to the project's gender relevant commitments quoted above gender problematic has been included in the process of teachers' training, but it made up one out of circa one hundred teaching modules. According to the Prague-based worker equal participation of all attendants in the training activities is emphasized. The commitment to hire a female external assistant had to be dropped because, according to the Education Manager:

*'a woman could work in this kind of position only if she was divorced ... because a husband would usually not allow his wife to travel long distances and spend nights out of home [and further] women usually can't ride motorbikes, which is a precondition for this position'* (8 September 2011).

We received no information concerning the cluster school methodology because this shall be implemented during a later stage of the project. In addition to the activities and commitments established in the 2010-2012 project proposal some gender-sensitive decisions and procedures have been adopted by the implementing team, such as choosing a female teacher, Carla, to lead the local trainers. Among other qualities Carla *'is a role model for many of the female participants,'* says



the Education Manager (8 September 2011). Carla supports and encourages female participants in the training. Further, the implementation team wrote official letters to jealous husbands who tried to prevent their wives from attending the course. The Education Manager thought jealousy was one of the most important barriers to women's access to education provided by the PiN in Kuemba. Finally, the implementation stipulated that 20 per cent of teachers attending the course and appointed by local authorities must be female. This number roughly corresponds with the proportion of female primary school teachers in Kuemba. According to the Education Manager, without such quota *'women could easily be forgotten'* (8 September 2011). However, he thought higher quotas would not be feasible because:

*'this is how the project has been framed and the locals know it. Possibly, if the project was focused specifically on women and would be presented as such, higher quotas would be more feasible'* (8 September 2011).

The project's initial setting limits some gender equality initiatives. For instance, the Education Manager remembers that when he proposed that his local team would distribute 500 stationery sets to equal number of girls and boys in order to materially support the girls and also to *de facto* open this topic, the reaction he received from his team was absolutely negative. In this respect the alphabetization project (2009-2011) he participated in was *'much more interesting'* (8 September 2011). There the 1:1 gender quotas were set as a basic pre-condition when dealing with the local authorities and although *'sometimes it was very hard to explain to them, why'* (8 September 2011), it worked. The project was reported as successfully implemented by the respective CZDA monitoring report when completed by circa 850 persons (Náprstek 2011:3).

Education for all is a key development goal (MDG 2) and also a basic precondition for any further development. The noticeable low accessibility of education for women in rural Angola is generally well-known (UN 2002, IPFD 2002, etc.) and was further confirmed in the Analysis specifically with respect to Kuemba (Houdková - Čáp 2009). Nevertheless, this apparent gender inequality has not been seriously reflected by the CZODA until now; on the contrary, its structural setup was accepted throughout the whole programme. The Czech implementers' activities sketched out above show considerable sensitivity and creativity to attend to special needs of female participants in the training. However, their initiatives appear to function only within the framework established in the programme's formulation. When trying to challenge the prevailing gender rules and power relations they meet with strong resistance and have to abandon their ambitions in order to ensure that the project is efficient.

Do the relevant CZODA actors really want to take part in development assistance of this kind? It is obvious that if things continue along these lines for a long time, one day we might see all the boys of Kuemba attending primary schools while two thirds of the girls stay at home looking after



the household and cooking for their brothers. This is why it is crystal-clear that fulfilling long term development goals in Kuemba without seriously considering gender questions is impossible. Is the CZODA able to eventually change its focus from abstract sectors towards concrete people and communities? It seems that such change cannot come unless the current CZODA system changes its way of understanding gender equality and development. See more detailed information on this topic in the following section.

### **3.4. Comparing policy and practice: key findings**

According to its international and European commitments, the Czech Republic and its development assistance should mainstream gender in all its strategies, policies, decisions and actions. CZODA should also set up new opportunities for women's empowerment in any social context where deemed appropriate, with the ultimate goal of bringing about gender equality. This requirement is not just formal but it stems from the essential realization that unequal relations between males and females in terms of power, social status and wealth, constitute one of the key obstacles to eradication of global poverty.

This study reflects how the Czech commitments towards gender equality are fulfilled both in theory and in practice. The study also aspires to identify barriers which might hinder development of gender sensitive policies and strategies within the CZODA. With respect to these goals the following findings are presented:

#### **Narrow interpretation of gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment in major strategic document**

In terms of the strategic and policy setting, including gender equality as a cross-cutting principle in the Strategy 2010-2017 might be regarded as a major breakthrough. However, the Strategy 2010-2017 utilizes two complex concepts, gender mainstreaming and women empowerment, in a very limited way. The document sees gender mainstreaming as applying gender perspective '*in the programming of development cooperation and in various stages of the project cycle*' whereas it primarily means applying gender perspective in any action in all areas and on all levels. Further, the interpretation of women's empowerment in the Strategy 2010-2017 is explicitly and solely connected with the activities in conflict and post-conflict areas, whereas this concept primarily refers to increasing the women's strengths in any social context. Limited in its view of these two concepts, CZODA through the Strategy 2010-2017 severely limits the role they could play in pursuing gender equality.



### **Marginal consideration of gender issues within project cycle**

Gender analysis, meaning the assessment of the respective impacts the proposed project will have on men and women, does not constitute a fundamental, not even a significant condition for the eventual project's approval and realization, but is rather a complementary perspective to be employed optionally. This is clearly manifested in the marginal considerations of gender issues within the whole CZODA project cycle. Namely, gender issues feature minimally in the programming, receive only negligible importance in the assessment forms used in the identification and formulation phases and are reflected only formally in the implementation report's template. In addition, the available evaluation report on the education project in Ethiopia actually did not answer the gender relevant question posed in the Terms of Reference. Low requirements towards the implementers in terms of gender expertise are topped by low awareness on gender issues among the interviewed civil servants.

### **Lack of financial and human resources – lack of prioritization**

Gender equality has never had any concrete budget allocation within the CZODA financial scheme. Also, no one is directly responsible for gender aspects in the CZODA implementation. This proves lacking political prioritization, even though Human Rights are the flagship of the Czech Foreign policy.

### **Neglect of local social context**

The analysis shows that while the CZODA programming, identification and implementation are pursued predominantly in cooperation with the partner states' institutions and authorities, there is a tendency for neglecting those most in need. The CZODA actors uncritically follow local power structures while those most marginalized usually do not possess means to communicate their needs to the state institutions. For example, as the rural women in Angola often speak only their local language their direct communication with the Angolan authorities, let alone the development workers, is hindered. Yet, they definitely hold the key for future development in rural Angola and should not be neglected. Since the hardships of rural women in post-conflict Angola is generally well known the problem does not consist in lack of information, but in lack of preparedness to help to those most in need.



### **Gender avoidance strategies in CZODA discourse**

In terms of the CZODA implementation, the analysis of the Support of Primary Education in the Rural District of Bié (2006-2012) shows that it substantially increased the overall capacity and quality of primary education, while at the same time reinforcing and even entrenching the trend of women's very low access to education in this region. This does not pose any problem for the programme itself, as it in its own logic sees primary education as an issue stripped of any gender connotations. But if we follow the wider logic demanding primary education for all, as pronounced in the MDGs, the EU Consensus on Development and a great deal of other Documents, we have to conclude that this programme's overall set up is entirely false and its outcomes are unjust and unsustainable. Although women's alarmingly low access to education in rural Angola has been highlighted in various studies (UN 2002, IPFD 2002), acknowledged in the CZODA 2005-2010 Programme document for Angola and confirmed in the Analysis financed by the CZODA, the CZODA continuously and systematically supports and foster schooling system in which female participation in primary education is two thirds lower than the male.

Why did the CZODA machinery, mainly the MFA, CZDA and PiN, fail to adjust its strategies and policies and develop and implement a gender sensitive programme in Angola despite plentiful information on gender inequalities on the ground? At first sight the CZODA activities in Angola might resemble a part of sophisticated plot for entrenching the male domination in this country; reality is however much more banal. The CZODA actors did not take the signals into serious consideration because they did not understand them. In order to explain this notion it is useful to employ the metaphor of discourse.

Discourse, as a system of signification continuously created and recreated mainly in the process of human communication, possesses the ability to define and demarcate the realm of the 'common sense knowledge'. Thus it produces and reproduces what is generally understood as right, legitimate or natural, and it silences other possibilities by either ignoring them or presenting them as void of meaning or incomprehensible. Similarly, discourse also defines *subjects* authorized to speak and to act and creates meaning via binary dichotomies, when the meaning of one term is built upon the other, representing its clear opposite. Thereby it produces dichotomies like modern/traditional, developed/developing, European/Third World, etc. Often we witness discursive strategies subsuming the better part of the dichotomy into the notion of *us*, while the worst part is exported into *them*, so the dichotomy *us/them* becomes the overarching one.

The CZODA dominant discourse, as can be established from the wide range of analysed documents



and from our interviews, presents itself thematically primarily along the priority sectors defined without any understanding of their gender dimensions (see Strategy 2010-2017). Gender irrelevant indicators from within the sectors form the core of the common sense goals naturally pursued within the CZODA. The general direction of aid is given by the bodies and organizations on the part of the Czech state (including FORS), the partner state (e.g. the Ministry of Development) and the implementing organizations, while the national strategy and policy papers (both of the Czech Republic and the partner countries) function as the main referential points for discursive legitimization of the agenda. In its dominant discourse the CZODA sees gender equality as either equality in numbers (quasi mainstreaming) or as protecting women from direct discrimination or violence (quasi empowerment). Every notion of gender equality going beyond this limited understanding is presented as unrelated to the CZODA agenda. This is usually justified by one of the four following arguments:

- CZODA does not need to reflect gender equality aspect because gender equality is mainly the problem and responsibility of the Developing countries, not ours.
- Formally demanding gender equality reflection is an obstacle and one must be smart enough to overcome it (e.g. the problem of equal gender participation in the so called Muslim countries).
- Gender inequality is a general problem wedded to the local context, but since our tasks are different, we cannot get involved (e.g. the socio-cultural context in Angola or the community problem in the evaluated project in Ethiopia).
- Reflection of gender equality is irrelevant to some topics (e.g. the technical projects or the promotion of democracy).

Unequivocally these gender avoidance strategies (one might also say stereotypes) treat gender issues as irrelevant, incomprehensible, foreign or irresolvable. As we have seen, it is quite easy to consider gender inequality as the problem of *them*, the Developing countries. In the Angolan case we see that by displacing gender equality from the CZODA Czech actors systematically foster the very structures which lay behind the apparent gender inequality in the first place.

#### **4. Recommendations**

With the aim to increase gender sensitivity of the CZODA strategies, policies, programmes and projects in the near future we present the following recommendations to the key actors.

##### **CZODA policy makers and civil servants**

Since the CZODA system has just undergone profound changes in terms of legal, strategic and



policy documents, no significant changes are expected to occur by the end of this programming period in 2017. Still, gender issues can be prioritized by means of:

- Raising awareness - by making concrete steps to substantially increase awareness on gender and development among civil servants working in the CZODA. For instance, civil servants should take part in available trainings, workshops and conferences on the respective topic.
- Human resources - by creating a gender focal point, probably within the CZDA, directly responsible for gender aspects in the CZODA.
- Financial resources - by earmarking resources for gender equality.
- Projects' identification and formulation - by taking into account the wide spectrum of information available on the local social and gender context, e.g. reports and studies from IO's and NGO's active in the area.
- Projects' monitoring and evaluation - by collecting gender relevant data from the monitoring and evaluation reports for the purpose of future analysis, while using its own and also external gender expertise.

### **Czech NGOs working in development**

As the main implementing actors the NGO's share substantial part of responsibility for the CZODA outcomes. As such they should:

- Embrace the concepts of gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment in their fullest meaning, so that they can be applied in their projects.
- In cooperation with the FORS gender working group develop and implement their own gender equality policy, both for internal functioning and development activities.

### **Czech women's organizations**

As the main experts on gender women's organizations should:

- Function in the CZODA as the watchmen/watchwomen of women's rights.
- Commit themselves to spreading deeper understanding to gender issues among the CZODA actors, especially concerning gender power relations in the private, community, corporate and working sphere.

### **FORS**

As the main instrument the Czech non-governmental actors can use to influence the Czech and European institutions and policies FORS should embrace the ideas of gender equality and equity as the basic principles for sustainable development assistance. Concretely, it can step in this direction by:



- Integrating gender aspects into its analyses (e.g. into AidWatch).
- Using gender-neutral language.

### **Academic institutions**

As gender relations are present throughout human society, gender perspective could be effectively integrated in many fields of social science and humanities. In order to contribute towards the CZODA gender sensitivity academics should:

- Make gender aspects of the CZODA the topic of their and their students' research.
- Get involved in public discussion on gender and development.

### **External actors (EU institutions, IOs, INGOs and foreign NGOs)**

External actors can help increasing the CZODA gender sensitivity particularly by:

- Engage in dialog with the CZODA institutions and actors concerning gender relevant aspects of the CZODA policies, strategies and outcomes.
- Cooperate with all relevant CZODA actors in sharing gender relevant knowledge and good practices.

### **General and final recommendation**

In regards of the lacking information on gender relevant context of the CZODA programmes and projects it can be beneficial to begin with systematic collection of gender relevant data from the CZODA priority territories and sectors. Such dataset could inform the relevant CZODA actors and allow for a complex reflection of the CZODA gender impacts in the future.

### **Conclusions**

This study is undertaken with the following objectives:

- Gather solid evidence about how Czech policy commitments concerning gender equality in development cooperation are (or are not) being translated into action;
- Ensure that recipients of Czech Development Cooperation in Partner countries express their views on what needs to be done to fully implement gender equality policies;
- Formulate sound recommendations to push gender equality into the centre of the Czech development cooperation and strengthen such environment for CSOs to deliver on gender equality in Czech development cooperation.

The research revealed a limited and misleading success in translating into action the Czech policy commitments to gender equality in development cooperation. While ignoring gender equality in



legislative and in financial planning, the main strategic document reserves gender mainstreaming only for the programming stage and for various stages of the project, and connects women's empowerment explicitly to the activities in conflict and post-conflict areas. Such a conceptual hamstringing is accompanied by marginal considerations of gender issues within the CZODA project cycle proceedings as well as by narrow and stereotypical interpretations of gender questions in international development shared among the interviewed civil servants. To them gender issues are either an obstacle, an irrelevant aspect or just not a topic at all, and they are only willing to fully attend to gender when women are obvious victims of direct discrimination or are struck by consequences of war.

Unfortunately, neglecting gender at the strategy and policy level fits with the dramatically unequal gender impact of the six and half years lasting educational programme under analysis. The programme aims at increasing the capacity and improving the quality of the primary education sector in Bié, a predominantly rural province in Angola. Even if hardship of rural women in post-conflict Angola is highlighted in available secondary literature and was confirmed with respect to Bié in the course of the project, the programmes' premises were not reconsidered. The CZODA, thus, helped Bié in moving towards a situation in which all the boys are enrolled in primary education while two thirds of girls stay at home, clean the house and cook for their brothers.

To conclude on a more positive note we must point out that there is enormous space for improvement. As the CZODA system has just undergone profound changes in terms of legal, strategic and policy documents, no significant changes can be expected before the end of this programming period in 2017. Still, gender issues can be prioritized in the CZODA machinery with respect to general awareness, human and financial resources and also projects' identification, formulation, monitoring and evaluation. For their part, NGOs can gain a lot through mastering the concepts of gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment and by developing their own gender equality policies. Women's organizations can function as the guardians of women's rights and move the relevant actors towards deeper understanding of gender issues. Strategically integrating gender aspects into their analyses and using gender correct language FORS can become a role model in this effort. Academic institutions can contribute by integrating gender aspects into their research agenda and by enhancing public discussion. Finally, external actors could engage the CZODA in a dialog and share their knowledge with all those possibly interested. All these actors can also begin with a systematic collection of gender relevant data in order to inform future development activities and allow for a complex reflection of the CZODA gender impacts in the future.



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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.

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## One World Action (OWA)

OWA was a civil society organization established in 1989 to work alongside rural and urban women's organizations and networks across Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Through capacity-building, networking and advocacy, it worked on issues such as women's rights, participatory governance and social exclusion. It was advocating and campaigning in the UK and Europe to challenge international policies to make and keep people poor. OWA has ceased operations and it closed its office in September 2011.

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