



Three years with pilot embassies for gender equality – what have we learnt?

Background

In 2011, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs selected 6 embassies¹ as pilot embassies for strengthened efforts for women's rights and gender equality for a period of three years. The purpose of the initiative was to explore ways to make gender mainstreaming more systematic and results oriented at the embassies. It was prompted by the Evaluation of the Strategy for Women and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation" (1997-2005) and the Mid-Term Review of the Norwegian Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation (2007-2009), both showing that although political ambitions for gender equality in development cooperation were high, they have a tendency to evaporate when it comes to operationalization and implementation.

For the embassies, the pilot initiative involved more resources, political visibility, more assistance from Norad, more focus on capacity building and yearly reporting on a specific results framework for the

Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality (2007-2013). The pilot embassies with energy portfolios were also prioritized for support through a framework agreement with Energia, the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy. The pilot phase has led to an increased level of activities and funding towards gender equality at the embassies (funding earmarked with the OECD DAC gender markers have increased by approx. 13% on average among the pilot embassies during the 3 year period).

This brief showcases briefly some of the approaches the embassies took to strengthen their efforts for women's rights and gender equality, points out two important challenges and outlines recommendations that the pilot embassies have jointly identified and signed on to through this brief.

Best practices/Promising practices

The pilot embassies have taken initiatives that show that there are many opportunities to bring gender equality into high level dialogues and technical sectors. The embassies are supporting national ownership, voices for women's rights, gender equality in policy dialogue, mainstreaming of gender in the development portfolio and efforts to introduce gender equality in the energy sector in particular. These are important building blocks in the process of establishing a systematic approach to gender mainstreaming and support to women's rights and gender equality. Whereas many of these initiatives are new and results often not yet visible, we find them promising and a source of inspiration. An evaluation of results of development cooperation for women's rights and gender equality has been planned by the Evaluation Department of Norad in 2014. This will shed further light on concrete results.

¹ Angola, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Uganda



Angola – *how to add value in a non-traditional development cooperation context*

Angola will most likely become a middle-income country in near future and the Embassy in Angola is not a traditional development cooperation embassy. In fact, aid plays a minor part in the country's economy. Thus, the Embassy did not have the entry point that a broad development portfolio provides for supporting women's rights and gender equality. However, it has built on its support to women's organisations and activists and identified an added value for itself as a donor in an environment where support to women's organisations is scarce, but much needed. The Embassy has also used the opportunity of a newly established human rights dialogue with the Angolan Government to place women's rights, in particular domestic violence, on the agenda at a high political level.

Ethiopia – *gender and climate change*

In Ethiopia, the Embassy is supporting the Climate Resilient Green Economy Initiative, a large and complex venture in support of climate change resilient development, reducing carbon emissions, acquiring low carbon and resilient technology and strengthening green growth. The Embassy has requested assistance from Norad to advice on gender mainstreaming of the programme, which is complex and covers a variety of stakeholders in the three

sector pillars agriculture, forestry and energy. This is work in progress and it remains to be seen how the entry points for gender mainstreaming are followed up in the three pillars. One important measure will be to involve national stakeholders for women's rights and gender equality in the process, including Gender Units in the relevant line ministries. Another will be to introduce gender sensitive indicators in the results framework to be able to track performance related to the gender dimension.

Malawi – *bringing gender equality into agriculture sector work*

The Embassy in Malawi is a major donor in the agriculture sector, and has through the Agriculture Sector Wide Approach (ASWAP) and its Technical Working Group for Gender and HIV/AIDS argued for inclusion of gender perspectives at all levels of the sector. 70 % of agriculture workers in Malawi are women, and through active engagement in the sector groups the Embassy is making sure that they are not forgotten in plans and policies. In 2013, a special focus has been on ensuring that the sector programme targets 50 per cent women in all activities, such as access to agricultural inputs and extension services, as well as employment opportunities in the upgrading of rural roads. This, together with literacy classes and micro-finance activities in NGO programmes supported by the Embassy, has contributed to greater

economic empowerment for women farmers in Malawi.

Mozambique – *developing a support programme for gender and energy*

The Embassy in Maputo has substantial energy cooperation with Mozambique. To support the Mozambican government in mainstreaming gender equality in the sector, a separate program on capacity building and training of gender focal points was set-up in 2012. The programme has gained on strong ownership from the government, and has given the opportunity to identify, fund and address capacity gaps and needs within strategic energy sector partners that are key to ensure that women's energy needs and access to energy are taken into account in the energy sector cooperation². The program has also initiated an interesting demonstration project, with the aim to showcase use of electricity in rural areas, focusing on raising women's awareness and power use for both household and economic activities.

Nepal – *consistent support to women, peace and security gives results*

Through several years the Embassy in Nepal has supported women's organisations in Nepal to advocate for the inclusion of women in the peace process and a national action plan (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace, and Security. This advocacy work

² Read more about this initiative: <http://www.norad.no/en/thematic-areas/energy/gender-in-energy>



resulted in the launch of Nepal's NAP on 1325 in 2011. Through the Nepal Peace Trust Fund the Embassy also funds project proposals for the implementation of NAP. The Embassy has further followed up the support to women's organisation's advocacy by supporting the establishment of a new umbrella organization, Sankalpa, organizing several of the major women's organisations. Supporting a strong voice for women's organisations will provide women a better opportunity to influence the important peace and constitutional processes in Nepal on their own terms. Support to women politicians through an alliance has also been instrumental in creating a stronger voice for gender equality and women's rights. This has created possible collaboration with the women politicians and the civil society organizations to advocate for specific issues on women's agenda e.g. related to citizenship.

Uganda – gender mainstreaming in the energy sector

The Embassy has supported the Uganda Rural Electrification Agency's work to improve electricity access to rural communities. This has a gender dimension in improving women's health and reducing strain through for example reducing the use of timber and charcoal for food preparation and the possibility of eased access to fresh water (electric pumps). In 2012, the Embassy in Uganda received assistance from Energia, to

develop gender baseline indicators for the Norwegian energy sector cooperation with Uganda in order to better track results related to gender equality and women's rights. This collaboration came to a halt as Norwegian funding was suspended following the corruption scandal in 2012. If continued, it would likely have resulted in a similar programme to that in Mozambique. Nevertheless, the cooperation has prompted the Petroleum Exploration and Production Department (PEPD) and the Petroleum Supply Department (PSD) to prepare an initial analysis identifying gender issues and actions needed³.

Challenges

Results based management and reporting

Whereas the yearly reporting did improve along the way in both quality and quantity, it also highlighted challenges regarding the way we document results of development cooperation. The reporting was to great extent activity, process and output oriented and in many cases does not make us able to say much about likely impact. The reporting is of course to great extent dependent on input and reporting from development partners and this underlines the importance of establishing a common ground with partners: What does it mean to mainstream gender? How do you get from activities to results? How do you measure results

³ Read more about this initiative: <http://www.norad.no/en/thematic-areas/energy/gender-in-energy>

for women's rights and gender equality? Joint training in results based management and gender equality for embassy staff and partners can be one way of getting to common ground⁴.

Commitment

The status as a pilot embassy created expectations for strengthened efforts for women's rights and gender equality and the embassies had support from management to do this. This has been visible through the reporting and in the increased funding towards women's rights and gender equality. The question is however: will this continue after the pilot phase has ended? One promising factor is that all the embassies did over the three years develop specific Embassy Action Plans for Gender Equality. Also, the annual business plans of the embassies do to great extent include specific goals related to gender equality. This might be one way of institutionalizing the efforts and make the embassies better able to report on gender equality work through the yearly reporting mechanisms. However, high turnover of embassy staff is a particular challenge, thus capacity building must be regarded as a continuous task, not a one-off activity.

⁴ This is also in line with recommendations on results based management in the OECD DAC Peer Review of Development Policies and Programmes of Norway (2013). Norad conducted two such activities in 2012 for the embassies in Ethiopia and Angola.

Recommendations from pilot embassies

The pilot embassies jointly developed the following recommendations to be implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies to institutionalize gender mainstreaming and make it more results oriented. These are important prerequisites to deliver on the high political ambitions for women's rights and gender equality and demands that the grant management framework places on gender mainstreaming.

- Introduce clear reporting requirements for women's rights and gender equality in the established reporting routines⁵. This will provide improved information on the impact of Norwegian development funds in this important area. The embassy gender focal points also highlighted how the yearly reporting had assisted them in entering into dialogue with other sectors at the embassy and provided an opportunity to discuss gender mainstreaming across portfolios.
- Translate political priorities of women's rights and gender mainstreaming into clear instructions through the yearly budget allocation letters to the embassies



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⁵ Reporting on annual business plans ('virksomhetsplaner')

- Enhance accountability by making performance on gender equality a standard topic for professional assessments⁶ for all staff including management
- Embassy Action Plans for Gender Equality have been instrumental in creating awareness of gender equality, identify clear priorities and enhance accountability for gender mainstreaming at the embassies.
- Prioritization of capacity building of both embassy staff and partners is a key success factor for mainstreaming in practice. The use of the international network Energia has been instrumental to the achievements in mainstreaming gender in the energy sector cooperation in Mozambique and Uganda. Training in results based management is needed by both embassy staff and partners. Capacity building is however not a one-off activity, but requires continuous attention, particularly in an environment of high turnover/rotation such as embassies.



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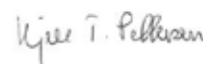
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